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STRAY LEAVES

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BY THE SAME AUTHOR

MEN AND LETTERS

Crown 8vo

Fourth Edition

# *STRAY LEAVES*

*By* HERBERT PAUL, M.P.

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IN MEMORIAM  
D. G.

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# STRAY LEAVES

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*Bishop Creighton*

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**B**ISHOP THIRLWALL once told a friend whom he met at the Athenæum that he had spent the whole day in writing letters. He had written thirty. "Three of them," he added, "were important, and it was necessary that I should write them. The rest might have been written by my butler." That great intellect, which had no superior, if indeed it had an equal, on either the episcopal or the judicial bench, was frittered away on an infinite deal of nothing, and an interminable series of nobodies. Yet Dr. Thirlwall had a comparatively small diocese, containing a very large proportion of Dissenters. It did not kill him. He lived to a green old age, and died in an honoured retirement. Far different was the fate of Dr. Creighton, who broke down as a racehorse would break down if he were put to draw a coal-truck. Sydney Smith's favourite nightmare was to be preached to death by wild curates. One might say without flippancy that Bishop Creighton was bored to death by fussy incumbents. For in

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all seriousness there can be few things more tragic than the spectacle of fine and rare mental gifts, which might have been employed in building a monument more durable than brass, wasted upon trifles to which no sensible and educated man would voluntarily give two thoughts. Dr. Creighton was among the ablest and most learned historians of the century. The work which he did before he became a bishop, I mean his "History of the Papacy During the Reformation," will long outlast the fruits of his episcopal labours, important as they were. And yet it is hard to say that such a man should not be a bishop. Dr. Creighton had all his life a strong interest and belief in the Church of England. He regarded the Church not merely as a spiritual body, but also as a national institution, inseparably connected with the growth and development of the English people. He believed in bishops, and in their power to do good, as well secular as religious. By universal consent he ruled two dioceses with conspicuous ability and success. A man must die somehow, and he died nobly, a victim to duty. His wonderful faculty of organisation, his social influence, his tact and brilliancy in addressing audiences of every class, would never

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have been discovered if he had remained a Canon of Windsor and gone on writing books. He might have become, like Dean Wellesley and Dean Davidson, a bishop-maker. A book-maker, even in the literary sense, he could never have been.

A bishop's life ought to be anything rather than trivial, and that was certainly the last thing which Dr. Creighton would have desired his own life to be. But he could not emancipate himself from the thralldom of *das Gemeine*, the common, and he died, as he might himself have said, of blessing hassocks. I am not an ecclesiastical reformer. I have no suggestions to make on utilising suffragans. What concerns me is the premature close of a great career, and, as a corollary, the reason why Dr. Creighton is not, under Providence, alive now. It is simply because he would not or could not confine himself to essentials, and leave secondary things in the hands of secondary persons. The only consolation is that he died in the plenitude of his physical and intellectual vigour, before any sign of weakness, of decadence, or of approaching age could be detected by the keenest observer. I suppose every one who knew Dr. Creighton would agree that his vitality was the most striking thing

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about him. His spare figure, his rapid walk, his elastic step, were in perfect harmony with the range of his interests, the quickness of his apprehension, and the readiness of his replies. As with many short-sighted men, his hearing was particularly acute, and it was observed that he never heard better than when he seemed to be asleep. He was always ready to talk, and, like most really good talkers, he was also a good listener. He was incapable of missing the point, and he could not be obscure. He was not specially famous as a sayer of good things, and no man's speech was less formal. He liked plunging into a conversation just as he found it, and saying the first thing that came into his head, which was not infrequently some outrageous paradox. The correct thing to say of Dr. Creighton is, I gather from what I have read, that he was "too paradoxical." That is, of course, a matter of taste. A paradox must contain an element of truth, or it is simply ridiculous. Its value consists in its being at once true and contrary to received opinion. "He that seeketh his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it," is a paradox. But Christians regard it as a truth. I do not say that Dr. Creighton's paradoxes were always serious. Sometimes

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they were, as when he said that all knowledge was opposed to common sense. Most often they were audacious fun: gravity agreed as little with Dr. Creighton as with Sterne. The peculiar carriage of the body, intended to hide deficiencies of the mind, was abhorrent to him. In church no one was more reverent, on public occasions no one more episcopal, than he. But he never assumed pontifical airs in private. He had a good deal of the undergraduate in him to the last. He talked illimitable nonsense to children, and sometimes, it must be admitted, to grown-up people, who thought that the Bishop was wanting in respect for their intelligence. He certainly did not under-rate the number of fools in the world; perhaps he overrated it, for people are not always so silly as they seem. But the Bishop's own irrepressible gaiety and youth of heart were accountable for most of his quips. Then he wanted to stir his company up, to rouse their combative instincts, to make them talk. He could not bear dulness, and he was the life of every society into which he came. He did not spoil conversation by monopolising it, but he kept it going, he never let it run dry. There was hardly anything about which he could not, and would not, converse. His

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memory, though more substantive than verbal, was wonderfully comprehensive. He would pass from classical scholarship to social gossip, from mediæval history to Italian inns, with perfect ease, always avoiding shop by the way. He prided himself on knowing Italy as well as any Englishman, and he appeared to remember every picture in every church he had seen. He never, I should think, knew what it was to feel shy. He made a point of getting into conversation, as the phrase is, with all classes in all countries wherever he went, being in the first place a good linguist, and in the second place not much caring how he spoke a language so long as he made himself intelligible. And somehow every one wanted to talk to him, his geniality was so irresistible.

As a rule, a man who seems always serious is never serious, but merely trivial. I do not think that Dr. Creighton had the slightest touch of the profound and melancholy humour which distinguished Swift and Carlyle, nor even of the half-cynical, half-sentimental humour which belonged to Thackeray. He was the most cheerful of men, full of high spirits, and enjoying every moment of his life. But about things for which he really cared, such as, to take only secular examples,



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history and local institutions, he was more than serious, he was earnest and enthusiastic. He would poke fun at them, but it was all in the way of affection. Not long before his death he became a member of the governing body for the University of London. He was already burdened, as the event showed, beyond his strength. But he entered with the keenest zest into these new duties, and was constantly meditating schemes for making the university serviceable to the people. Yet he would be as likely as not to tell a casual acquaintance that the worst thing to do with people was to educate them, because it was ten to one they remained ignorant, and only became conceited. It cannot be denied that he gave annoyance, and that not merely to stupid or pompous people, by these fashions of speech. They thought he was showing disrespect for their mental powers, and perhaps they were justified in thinking so. But it was not the fact. The causes of the Bishop's inveterate love for paradox were, I should suppose, mainly two. In the first place, it was the habit of Oxford common rooms in his day, and few men changed less than he. In the second place, it saved time and trouble. The Bishop was a very busy man, who saw a great

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many people, and he could not be always suiting his conversation to his company. We all know what Sir Robert Walpole did in similar circumstances. The Bishop's was at least a cleanlier shift. The most silent and sluggish of mankind are roused to combative loquacity when they hear their most settled convictions boldly denied, and their pet platitudes turned inside out, or upside down. Dr. Creighton did not aim, like some great talkers, at gathering round him a silent circle of admiring listeners. He liked to make others talk, and he almost always succeeded.

Dr. Creighton's taste was not perfect. No man's is. He was, I think, while he extolled character above intellect, a better judge of intellect than of character. Free as any human being has ever been from envy, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness, he was full, though not so full as he seemed, of friendly contempt. He sometimes failed to realise that a man who did not understand chaff, and would not play the game with him, might nevertheless have a sound and penetrating judgment which made his simple words of more value than many epigrams. I do not mean to say that this was so in all cases. I know what he has written about Sir George

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Grey and Lord Lilford. But I do mean that he habitually measured men (not women) too freely by an intellectual standard. On the other hand, he never imputed motives; he put the most favourable construction upon conduct; there was no bitterness in his satire. He had no reverence for other people's idols, and very few idols of his own. As Matthew Arnold says of Socrates, adopting the language of the Hebrew prophet, Dr. Creighton was terribly at ease in Zion. No disrespectful word about any moral or religious principle ever, I am sure, fell from his lips. But he would not enlarge the objects of his devotion to suit susceptible feelings. He sometimes, for instance, made one consider that, whatever Mr. Gladstone's political blunders may have been, there were reasons why a Christian bishop should speak of him with respect. But Dr. Creighton was the opposite of a hero-worshipper. He had an almost passionate belief in liberty, and disliked, except perhaps in Russia, the spectacle of men blindly following a leader. Being a thorough Englishman, he was, nevertheless, only too delighted to have an opportunity of shocking insular prejudice by pointing out the most prominent defects of the British character.

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But in nothing was he more English than in his love of freedom. His own independence of character was almost startling. In public he looked the most episcopal man on the bench. In private there was nothing of the bishop about him except his clothes. But in public, as in private, he was always Mandell Creighton, more like himself, so to speak, every year he lived, and not caring a halfpenny stamp what any one thought of him. That he liked people to think about him was possible. He was intensely human.

Dr. Thompson, of Trinity, complained that much of his life was occupied with "that worst kind of trifling called business." Dr. Creighton was, of course, overwhelmed with it. Besides his episcopal functions, he was an Ecclesiastical Commissioner and a trustee of the British Museum. He never neglected anything, except his own health and the necessity of regular meals. He would sit, as I have been told, at the Museum writing letters incessantly, but not missing a single point in the discussion, and taking part in it from time to time. No other face that I have seen had such an expression of concentrated energy. The Bishop seemed to have in him twenty lives, and it may be said that

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he died of compressing twenty into one. And yet nobody could lay aside work more easily, or enjoy a holiday more. Although he did not get much exercise in London, he kept up to the last the habit of taking long walks in Italian valleys and in the North of England, where he spent so many years of his life. He must have walked many scores of miles in the spacious garden at Fulham. Those who went to see the Bishop there on a Sunday afternoon always found him, if they found him at all, leisurely, chatty, hospitable, and apparently without a care in the world. There was the family tea-table, and there were the eternal cigarettes. The Bishop must have paid a fortune in tobacco-duty. The occasion was never improved. Anything, or any person, that came up was treated with perfect freedom, but at the same time with kindliness, if sometimes with irony. I made many attempts to discover what the Bishop's political opinions were, but I never once succeeded. He professed for politics, I think, more contempt than he really felt. For, after all, politics are the making of history, and the Bishop was nothing if not historical. In one of his last public addresses, the lecture on the Italian Renaissance at St. Paul's, he laid

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down the principle that he who claims to speak in the name of God should never, as Savonarola did, attach himself to a party. But it was not merely as Bishop of London that Dr. Creighton shrank from parties, nor was it only parties that he eschewed. What he really disliked, one might say hated, was the self-confidence without knowledge which he saw, or thought he saw, in politicians.

Comparisons have been drawn, very little to the purpose, between Mandell Creighton and Samuel Wilberforce. Except for a love of society, which after all is not very rare, the two great Bishops had nothing in common. Bishop Wilberforce's sincerity was, perhaps wrongly, but at least widely, suspected. Bishop Creighton was sincere to a fault. His loathing for cant sometimes drove him into the other extreme, and made him appear far more cynical than he was. Dr. Wilberforce, though a brilliant orator, a witty talker, and full of showy accomplishments, was shallow, inaccurate, and superficial. His criticism, or what he meant for criticism, of Darwin exposed him to the ridicule of all scientific men, whether they were Darwinians or not. Dr. Creighton had the most profound respect for knowledge, and minute accuracy was character-

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istic of all he wrote. Style, I think, he undervalued. He seemed to regard it as concealing or distorting the truth, and a more single-minded worshipper of truth never lived. He was quite capable of appreciating the best style, and he used to say that Plato had carried the art to the utmost limit of human perfection. But in his "History of the Papacy," which I am quite incapable of judging, except from the outside, he sacrifices everything to accuracy and to directness of narrative. There are no purple passages in the book. It is dry in the best sense, like champagne. Dull it never is. There is throughout it a sense of movement, the action never flags, and the characters of the Popes become as familiar to the reader as if they were contemporaries of his own. The book is wholly free from the taint of moral indignation. Even the career of Alexander the Sixth is described with scarcely an epithet, and the worst of his crimes are disproved by a few simple statistics. There are no flings at the Scarlet Lady, from which Wilberforce could not, for twenty pages, have refrained. Wilberforce's doctrinal orthodoxy was unimpeachable. It endeared him to Mr. Gladstone, and to others. About his devotion



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to truth there were at least two opinions. He was, however, undoubtedly a consummate man of the world, despite his odd, awkward, and singularly unsuccessful attempt to convert Charles Greville; and Dr. Creighton, with all his cleverness, was hardly that, though he was the most interesting and delightful of companions, especially if you were alone with him. He always knew what to say. In the more difficult art of knowing what not to say he was less proficient. He was intentionally unkind to no one. But he sometimes unconsciously gave pain to people who thought that a bishop must mean everything he said.

Samuel Wilberforce came into the world with great advantages. His father was equally and most justly respected in political, philanthropic, and evangelical circles. Mandell Creighton had his own way to make from the beginning. He owed nothing to any one. His own intellect and his own character were all that he had to work with from his birth at Carlisle to his death at Fulham. This is no attempt to sketch the course of his life. I did not know him until he became Bishop of Peterborough, and I did not see much of him until he came to London. I did,



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however, spend one Sunday with him at Peterborough, when the only other male guest, except the present Master of Emmanuel, was the late Professor Sidgwick, perhaps the most exact reproduction of a Greek philosopher that our age has seen. A conversation on Purcell's "Life of Manning" comes back to me in fragments as one of the most amusing I ever heard. Mr. Sidgwick was the more brilliant talker of the two. He had just that amount of hesitation in his speech which enhanced the effect of his pungent remarks; and, though he was the least pedantic of men, he never said anything which could not have been taken down in writing, and used in his favour afterwards. The character of the Cardinal underwent a searching and exhaustive analysis, a task which Mr. Purcell's labours undoubtedly facilitate. The Bishop had no love for the Church of Rome, and Mr. Sidgwick had no prejudice in favour of any Church. At last I found myself the Cardinal's advocate, and I said, rather feebly, that his asceticism must have been sincere. Mr. Sidgwick's quite unexpected reply may perhaps be quoted without impropriety. "He was a (pause) prudent man with a (pause) bad digestion." The Bishop

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and Mr. Sidgwick differed, I suppose (I do not pretend to speak with knowledge), almost as widely as men can differ upon fundamental subjects. But Dr. Creighton did not care two straws what a man's opinions were. He liked a clever man, he loved a good man. That was all he cared about, except that within the restraints of Christian charity he hated a bore.

One of the finest and most penetrating of all Dr. Creighton's personal criticisms is to be found in his account of Luther's attitude towards the Peasants' War. Luther on that occasion took the side of the powers that were. "The man who had cast away the bonds of ecclesiastical authority felt himself compelled to assert the binding obligation of civil authority with all the greater vehemence because he had been himself a rebel. *No man is so certain as he who draws a fine distinction because it is practically necessary.*" Dr. Creighton would probably have disclaimed a reference in these words to any statesman living when he wrote them. He would have considered that to degrade the functions of history. But it is impossible not to perceive that he was expressing his opinion of practical politics. He disliked them, not, as the Marquess of

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Halifax did, because they were a rough thing compared with the fineness of speculative thought, but because they were empirical, because they did not rest upon knowledge. He was incapable by nature of being a party man, though, if he could have sat in the House of Commons, he would have made an excellent debater. The House of Lords did not seem to suit him, and his clear ringing voice was seldom heard in it. It is, no doubt, a depressing audience. But Dr. Tait, whose mental powers were certainly not greater than Dr. Creighton's, held a leading position there for twenty years. Dr. Creighton was not an orator like Wilberforce, or his own predecessor at Peterborough, Magee. Though an interesting and stimulating, he was not in the vulgar sense of the term a popular preacher. He had not much admiration for eloquence and not much love of popularity. But on a platform, or at a public entertainment, there were few better speakers in England. Whether it were a cultivated audience, as at the dinners of the Royal Academy and the Literary Fund, or the hall of a midland town crowded with working men, Dr. Creighton always interested and excited his hearers. The Church Congress, not an easy

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body to manage, never had a better chairman. But the atmosphere of the Lords did not seem to suit him. Certainly addressing "sheeted tombstones by torchlight" was not in his way.

An excellent article on Dr. Creighton in the *Quarterly Review* attributes to him an overmastering desire for influence. He was ambitious in the noblest sense. He had the "dæmonic" gift of Socrates. He enjoyed the exercise of his remarkable faculty for the guidance of men and the management of affairs. He was also profoundly impressed with the value of historic truth and the duty of spreading it. But there never was a man less anxious to make proselytes or converts. He was far more interested in ascertaining other people's opinions than in getting them to adopt his own. Nor, indeed, had he always a very strong opinion. He had, what is very rare, a naturally impartial mind. He saw both sides in their weakness and in their strength, especially in their weakness. It amused him to watch the wrangling of men who knew no history, whether their disputes were political or ecclesiastical. The first question (I don't say the last) which he put to a dogma, or a principle, was not whether it were true or false—it might be partly one, and partly the

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other—but how it came to be there. Turn to the “History of the Papacy” for the Bishop’s views about confession, and you will be disappointed in your object. But your search will nevertheless be rewarded, for you will find this precious sentence: “Naturally, men preferred to confess to a wandering friar whom they had never seen before and hoped never to see again, rather than to their parish priest, whose rebukes and admonitions might follow them at times when the spirit of contrition was not so strong within them.” Gibbon seldom wrote anything better than that, and yet it is quite free from objection on religious grounds. It is the mere statement of a fact, and the humour is in the situation. For history, even when told with Dr. Creighton’s strict and cold fidelity, may teach lessons for itself. If confession is most popular when it is most perfunctory, the popularity of the practice can be no proof of its usefulness. Dr. Creighton was classed by Evangelicals as a High Churchman, and in some respects he might be called so. He was jealous for the dignity and independence of the Church, so far as an established Church can be independent. But there was a vein of sturdy English Protestantism in him which rebelled,

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and always would have rebelled, against the "Roman obedience." No man was more thoroughly imbued with the sentiment of the grand old text, "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

Perhaps no Englishman of real learning in our day, except Lord Acton, ever had his knowledge more at his fingers' ends than Dr. Creighton. If his memory was not quite equal to Lord Acton's, it was at once capacious and retentive, and his quickness could not have been exceeded. He was an omnivorous reader of Greek, Latin, English, French, German, and Italian. He had been thoroughly grounded in classical scholarship by Dr. Holden at Durham. He had a singular gift for extemporaneous translation, and he sometimes wrote Latin verses which were quite as good as the Pope's. Without German he could not have written his history. His Italian he refreshed every year in Italy. No bishop on the bench was fonder of French novels. It has been said that he did not read much poetry, but that is a mistake. On his last Easter holidays he read through the whole of Milton's poems again in the new pocket edition published by the Clarendon Press. I remember his saying to me that he

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found in them no proof of Milton having been an Arian. His mind was not poetical, nor, except in the sense of realising historic development, imaginative. But he had the scholar's love of literature for its own sake. He had a very strong belief that the Gospels, apart from their religious aspect, were models of biographical writing, and he would refer to the Acts of the Apostles as the perfection of historical narrative. Of modern historians he was no great admirer, though he was trained in the school of Stubbs. Macaulay sinned against his canon that history was fact, and nothing but fact, which would be all very well if facts spoke for themselves to people in general. Unfortunately, to most of us they are silent until they have been touched by the hand of a master. When Dr. Creighton abandoned history to be a bishop, he did not give up his interest in the subject. He often seemed to hanker after the comparatively quiet days when he could live so much in the past. Not that most men would have thought them quiet. For at Embleton, where most of his book was written, he worked a parish, took pupils, and sat as chairman on the board of guardians.

It will seem like one of his own paradoxes



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to say that the excellence of the Bishop's conversation makes the difficulty of showing people who did not know him how he talked. But it is so, and for this reason, among others. He never harangued in private. To hold forth was not in his way. He would start a subject—he was very good at that—and let any one who pleased take it up. Or he would flash a rapid glance at you, and then suddenly put a question. He once asked me, after a long chat with an eminent controversialist, whether I did not think that the mistake David made in his haste was to say “liars” instead of “fools.” Chief Justice Jervis's classification of mankind is not for episcopal ears, so I could only reply that no doubt we were all equally ignorant of history. He was good enough to approve of this gloss. At the same time, his interest in human nature was equally keen and benevolent. He declared that the population of Embleton would have furnished materials for another Balzac. To Balzac he was devoted, and he liked also an inferior artist, Gaboriau. I believe that he would have rivalled Monsieur Lecocq in the detection of an obscure crime, and the skill with which he manœuvred an undesirable resident out of his parish would



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have done credit to a great diplomatist. There was a point in this story, too long to tell, at which the individual in question appeared to be triumphant. "He boasted," said the Bishop, with his most Mephistophelian smile, "that he had done the parson." It soon turned out, of course, that the parson had done him. What the Bishop did not tell was the long series of kind, sympathetic, and unselfish acts by which he endeared himself to the poor. His heart was as soft as his head was hard. It was not fondness for Ritualists, nor even regard for the peace of the Church, but reluctance to deprive a good man of his livelihood, which led him to stop ecclesiastical prosecutions. "Live, and let live," was his motto. He was a bad hater. "Oh, he's a good fellow, but he doesn't understand the question." With some such words he would dispose of a clerical delinquent. Cruelty and presumptuous ignorance did make him angry, but hardly anything else did. In an age when Churchmen held high offices of State he would have been thoroughly at home. He would have liked to be Lord Chancellor as well as a bishop, at least in the days when it was possible for a bishop to be anything else. But he realised

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that those days were over. He had to decline the proposal that he should write the "Life of Queen Victoria" on the same scale as his "Life of Queen Elizabeth." The Queen asked him his reason. "If your Majesty wished me to write your life," was the reply, "your Majesty should not have made me a bishop." Once a bishop, always a bishop, is, from one point of view, a dreadful truth. There is no discharge in that war, and no rest for a bishop, except in the grave. Dr. Creighton went so far as to say that no one who thought, or had a mind, should be Bishop of London. The secular qualities required were those of a bank clerk. When he came to Peterborough he found that the clergy had been living for years in terror of their diocesan. Except with a few favourites, Dr. Magee was almost as remote and awful as Swift. Dr. Creighton soon changed all that. He put the humblest people at their ease with his good-humour, his high spirits, and his total absence of reserve. If he often puzzled the clergy, he never frightened them, and he played with their children as he played with his own. When he came to London he mixed freely in various sorts of society, for none came amiss to him, and he was just the same to

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them all. He was the reverse of dazzled, and used to complain that the average intelligence of Londoners was so low. Though it was very difficult to shock the Bishop, it was very easy to bore him, and pomposity of all kinds had that effect. Nor did he like gush. He was fond of destroying illusions, and proving that no popular hero's character would bear examination. He did not acquiesce in the glorification of the past. "There is far more real religion now," he said, "than there was in the so-called ages of faith." What we wanted was greater respect for knowledge. The Bishop had a good deal of the Socratic irony, though he was perhaps even more conscious of other people's ignorance than of his own.

There was something singularly attractive and also singularly Christian in the kindness which underlay Dr. Creighton's superficial irony and cynicism. His pecuniary generosity, perhaps the cheapest form of the virtue, is known to have been great. His hospitality was unbounded, and seemed to be part of his nature. There was nothing of the recluse in him. He really and truly loved all sorts and conditions of men. He also felt that most of them had rather

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a dull time, and he was the more determined that they should not be dull when they were with him. He and Mrs. Creighton adopted the pleasant theory that Fulham was a country-house, to which Londoners might be asked from Saturday till Monday. To his friends the Bishop was more than kind; he was sympathetic, warm-hearted, and affectionate. And he was always the same. Whatever worries he might have in his diocese he did not inflict them, or the depression they must have caused, upon his guests. He liked to talk about something else, and what was there that he could not talk about? An observer of human life has left it upon record that sense must be very good to be as good as nonsense. That was probably the Bishop's view. He certainly talked a lot of nonsense to children, and he made schoolboys roar with the wildness of his dog-Latin. Children adored him, for he understood exactly how to treat them. If he was too much inclined to treat all women like children, it was not contempt, but a sort of paternal and protective tenderness. He might have said with the poet, if he would have said anything so self-conscious, that "He gave whate'er he had to give to freedom and to youth." He did

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not grow old, or even middle-aged, himself. One always thought of him as a young man, and put down his occasional freaks to the exuberance of youth. "Alas!" one thought, "when he is old and grave, and Archbishop of Canterbury, he will not do these things any more." And now that he is gone, some of the things for which strict censors blamed him are not those which we miss the least. If ever a man's death was premature, his was. But it is vain to lament.

"His saltem accumulem donis, et fungar inani  
Munere."

Slight as this rough sketch is, it would be incomplete if I did not add one thing. The Bishop had, perhaps, no great turn for dogmatic theology. But he was the best practical Christian I have ever known.

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## *George Eliot*

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**T**HE first of living English critics has been fitly chosen to inaugurate the new series of Messrs. Macmillan's "English Men of Letters."

Mr. Leslie Stephen's "George Eliot" is a grave, sober, and measured estimate of a great Englishwoman. A clever and learned Frenchman, who speaks English like a native, said of the same publishers' "Twelve English Statesmen" that they included Henry the Second, who was a Frenchman; William the Third, who was a Dutchman; and Elizabeth, who was a woman. The masculine gender, say the grammarians, includes the feminine, and, by Lord Brougham's Act, the word "man" in an Act of Parliament includes woman, unless such inclusion be repugnant to the context, or where it would confer upon her any sort of right. Some of the best novelists are women; and since the time of Fielding, if not since the time of Defoe, it has been impossible to say that a novelist as such was not a person of letters. George Eliot's adoption of a fictitious name may have had something to do with her domestic circum-

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stances. It deceived many, though not Dickens, who had no doubt of the author's sex after reading "Scenes of Clerical Life." The fact that most people did doubt, while some were confident and wrong, seems to show that Messrs. Macmillan are right; that sex has nothing to do with literature, and that, even in the delineation of character, a woman may take the man's point of view. Mr. Stephen, by implication, denies this, and says that George Eliot's men are not so real as her women. "Convincing" is, I believe, the epithet which finds most favour in such cases with the modern school. I must confess that, to my mind, Adam Bede and Caleb Garth, Arthur Donnithorne and Fred Vincy, Brooke and Lydgate, Featherstone and Bulstrode, are as convincing as Mrs. Poyser herself, and even more convincing than Dinah Morris. It is impossible for the most acute reader always to determine an author's sex. Sometimes, of course, there can be no doubt. Nobody ever attributed "Rob Roy" to a woman, or "Northanger Abbey" to a man. Fielding is irredeemably masculine. So is Thackeray. So is Dickens. But a woman might have written "Robinson Crusoe," or "Clarissa," or "Far from the Madding Crowd." Miss

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Martineau was as masculine as Mrs. Gaskell was feminine, and Miss Edgeworth was as well acquainted with a fine gentleman as she was with a fine lady. Miss Austen, with singular self-control, abstains from an attempt to reproduce the conversation of men among themselves. But very few writers in the world's history have understood so well the limitations of their own genius, even when they had any, as Miss Austen felt rather than understood the limits of hers. George Eliot had a man's education, and the course of her life brought her into contact with more men than women.

Mr. Stephen, in his sketch of her uneventful life, has made the best use he could of very unpromising materials. George Eliot's own letters, published after her death by the trustful piety of her husband, are even less interesting than Jane Austen's. They are ponderous, conventional, and dull. Why any human being should have preserved them, let alone printed them, it is difficult to conceive. Yet Mr. Stephen has discovered here and there a phrase worth record and remembrance. Like George Sand, whom she did not otherwise in any way resemble, she sympathised with Louis Blanc and the Red Republicans of 1848. In her disgust with



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the Philistinism of her own people she wrote, "I feel that society is training men and women for hell." No one who has ever read it can forget the description in "The Mill on the Floss" of the "Imitation" and its effect on Maggie Tulliver's mind. Its effect upon Marian Evans's was less intense. "It makes one long to be a saint for a few months," she says. Most of us would like to be saints for a few months, to see whether it agreed with our constitutions. There would be crowds of Good Samaritans, said the witty divine, if it were not for the oil and the twopence.

With all her admiration for George Sand and Rousseau, George Eliot never caught the magical charm of their style. Her own, even at its best, had a hard, metallic tone, and the metal was not silver. She was not only a very learned woman, conscious of her learning, and a very able woman, conscious of her ability. She had also very warm affections and a deep feeling for the inexhaustible pathos of human life. But her powers of expression seldom found a simple and natural outlet, except indeed (and it is a great exception) in the mouths of her characters. It is difficult to sympathise with Dorothea Brooke, Mrs.

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Casaubon, when we read that her "grand woman's frame was shaken with sobs, as if she had been a despairing child." George Eliot had to move in the fetters of her own stored and cultivated mind, which grew heavier with years. Charles Dickens testified to the exquisite truth and delicacy both of the pathos and of the humour in "Scenes of Clerical Life." When they appeared in *Blackwood* they made, as they well deserved to make, a profound impression upon the educated public. Janet Dempster and Milly Barton and Mr. Gilfil are as real as genius could make them. "Janet's Repentance" has the melodramatic element which the other two stories are without. But they are all three true bits of human nature, and real efforts of the imagination. For George Eliot knew no more about the clergy than Trollope himself. The charming chapter of that otherwise tiresome book, "Theophrastus Such," called "Looking Back," which Mr. Stephen strangely omits to mention, has great biographical value. It tells how little Marian, or Mary Ann, Evans used to drive about Warwickshire with her father, whom she transforms into a clergyman, though he was really a land-agent. The country clergy of

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the Midlands in those days were for the most part laymen in white ties, hunting three times a week and preaching once. George Eliot passed from evangelical faith to sceptical free-thinking without taking the Establishment by the way. But she had a true and sincere sympathy with goodness of all kinds, with sorrow, with suffering, and with childhood. The famous, too famous, line of Terence was as true of her as of Chremes in the "*Heautontimorumenos*." "Depend upon it," she wrote to Blackwood, "depend upon it, you would gain unspeakably if you would learn with me to see some of the poetry and the pathos, the tragedy and comedy, lying in the experience of a human soul that looks out through dull grey eyes, and that speaks in a voice of quite ordinary tones." To that doctrine, if it deserves so formal a name, George Eliot was always faithful, and nowhere has she expressed it with more eloquence than in the closing sentences of "*Middlemarch*," her last great work of fiction: "That things are not so ill with you and me as they might have been is half owing to the number who lived faithfully a hidden life and rest in unvisited tombs." Such are the final words of what I cannot help regarding, though I

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know it is an unfashionable opinion, as the culminating effort of her genius. But there is the other side of the picture. "We insignificant people," she reminds us, "with our daily words and acts, are preparing the lives of many Dorotheas, some of which may present a far sadder sacrifice than that of the Dorothea whose story we know." For George Eliot was always didactic. She never made any pretence of not having a moral. From "Scenes of Clerical Life" to "Daniel Deronda" she preached to the conventional masses of her fellow-countrymen the gospel of self-sacrifice, self-surrender, and self-restraint. Although, or perhaps because, she broke away from orthodox religion, and even to some extent from orthodox morality, she held up a standard of duty, and maintained the loftiest ideals. She had not the smallest sympathy with what is called sentimentalism, with easy-going indulgence in the natural inclination of amiable and luxurious people. "The evil principle deprecated in that religion is the orderly sequence by which the seed brings forth a crop after its kind." Mr. Swinburne classes George Eliot with the "realistic" school because she allows Maggie Tulliver to fall in love with Stephen Guest. I do not

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yield even to Mr. Swinburne in my loathing for that "counterjumping Adonis," though I fall very far short of him in my power of expressing it. But I always thought that the modern realists boasted of having no morals, whereas George Eliot, so say the flippant, gives you "Moral, moral everywhere, and not a drop to drink." I cannot admit that she is ever dull, but she certainly is sometimes dry.

George Eliot's capacity for work was astonishing. Not even Southey was more methodical, and she did give herself time to think, which he was accused of not doing. "She finished 'Janet's Repentance,'" as Mr. Stephen tells us, "on the 7th of October 1857, and began 'Adam Bede' on the 22nd of October. She completed the first volume by the following March, and the second during a following tour in Germany, and after returning to England at the beginning of September completed the third volume on the 16th of November." Her later books are said with some truth to show signs of effort and strain on the writer's part. But nobody could say that of "Adam Bede." Mr. Stephen does not care for the lady preacher, Dinah Morris; and Seth Bede, Adam's brother, he abhors. It is one of the many charming features in this little

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book that the author makes no attempt to conceal his personal prejudices and predilections. For my part, I cannot help feeling pity for Seth, and Adam, and Dinah, and Hetty, and all the rest of them. They are involved in a common misfortune. They are eclipsed by Mrs. Poyser, whose sayings are still quoted by a world too oblivious of Mrs. Poyser's creator. "I have no stock of proverbs in my memory," said George Eliot, "and there is not one thing put into Mrs. Poyser's mouth that is not fresh from my own mint." Mr. Stephen regrets that Mrs. Poyser had no successors. None equally good perhaps. But Mr. Macey, and Dolly Winthrop, and Mrs. Cadwallader are not to be despised. Some of Mrs. Poyser's wit has passed into the language, like Falstaff's, and is, in the hackneyed phrase, too hackneyed for quotation. But Mr. Stephen has done well to reproduce the less familiar contrast between the old-fashioned rector Mr. Irwine and the more theological Mr. Ryde, who followed him. "Mr. Irwine was like a good meal o' victual, you were the better for him without thinking of it; and Mr. Ryde was like a dose of physic, he gripped you and worreted you, and after all he left you much the same." There is nothing so good as that in Swift's advice to

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a young clergyman, which, indeed, is rather like a dose of physic than a meal. It is certainly curious that George Eliot should have been her own Mrs. Poyser. A critic would almost certainly come to the conclusion that she was faithfully copied from real life. For George Eliot herself never approached nearer wit than a grave and temperate irony. Even that is in her books alone. In her letters she is severely literal. She is perhaps the one novelist, if not the one writer, who cannot be humorous except by proxy. Just as Goethe, having no religion of his own, could by the sheer force of genius counterfeit religious emotions in "*Wilhelm Meister*," so George Eliot, on a lower level and a smaller scale, could become for the moment "one of the untaught wits that help to stock a country with proverbs."

With the true instinct of the true critic Mr. Stephen points out in felicitous words George Eliot's combination of reverence for the past with hope for the future. "Her affectionate recognition of the merits of the old world," he says, "makes one feel how much conservatism really underlay her acceptance, in the purely intellectual sphere, of radical opinions." George Eliot's radicalism

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was not altogether confined to the purely intellectual sphere. She declared that she was neither an optimist nor a pessimist, but a "meliorist," and she was an advanced Liberal in politics. But she had, as Mr. Stephen says, a deep feeling of respect for the characters of men like her father—Tories of the old school, devotees of law and order, upholders, as the Duke of Wellington was, of government as such. There is indeed a haunting beauty and charm in the rural life of England seventy years ago, despite the scandalous condition of the criminal law and the poor law. Sometimes the squire was a tyrant, sometimes the parson was a toady. As a rule, they were honest Christian gentlemen doing their duty as they understood it, and holding themselves responsible for the moral and material welfare of the parish.

Most people will, I think, be disposed to agree with Mr. Swinburne that the third part of "*The Mill on the Floss*" is, as Dogberry would say, most tolerable, and not to be endured. The earlier parts are among George Eliot's very best work, containing humour not unworthy of Dickens, and sentiment as delicate, if not as tenderly refined, as Mrs. Gaskell's own. Tom is a brute, no doubt, and stupid as well



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as brutal. But Maggie's devotion to him would have been less touching if he had been more like Sir Charles Grandison, whom George Eliot admired with her whole soul. The aunts are inimitable, especially Aunt Pullet, and Mr. Pullet is worthy of his wife. He was oppressed, it will be remembered, by the mysteries of etymology, and could not understand why Lucy Deane was called "the bell of St. Ogg's." Even a little knowledge is sometimes a useful thing. Mr. Stephen judiciously quotes the incomparable scene in which Mrs. Pullet discusses her new bonnet with her sister, Mrs. Tulliver. "'I may never wear it twice, sister, who knows?' 'Don't talk o' that, sister,' answered Mrs. Tulliver, 'I hope you'll have your health this summer.' 'Ah, but there may come a death in the family, as there did soon after I had my green satin bonnet. Cousin Abbott may go, and we can't think o' wearing crape less nor half a year for him.'" It is impossible not to be reminded of Susannah and the death of Bobby. "'My young master in London is dead,' said Obadiah. A green satin nightgown of my mother's, which had been twice scoured, was the first idea which Obadiah's exclamation brought into Susannah's head. Well may Mr. Locke write a chapter

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upon the imperfections of words. 'Then,' quoth Susannah, 'we must all go into mourning.' But note a second time the word mourning, notwithstanding Susannah made use of it herself, failed also in doing its office; it excited not one single idea tinged either with grey or black—all was green. The green satin nightgown hung there still." Then the whole of Mrs. Shandy's wardrobe passes in procession through Susannah's brain. For how can her mistress wear colours any more? There is a cynicism in Sterne from which George Eliot was free. But his humour goes deeper than hers. It goes to the roots of things. Locke would have stared and gasped at the vagaries of his too faithful disciple.

To Mr. Stephen it seems that Guest was "another instance of her incapacity for portraying the opposite sex." As I have said before, I do not believe in this alleged incapacity, and I wish I could think that there were no Stephen Guests. Whether Maggie would have fallen in love with him is another question. He was the very last person she ought to have fallen in love with, and that, according to Sheridan, is an excellent reason. Almost any man would say beforehand that Anna Karenine could not really care for a

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mere animal like Wronsky. But Tolstoi forces conviction upon the mind, and George Eliot does not. The episode is strained and unnatural, although she herself says that it is an essential part of the book, and that, if she is wrong, then she had better not have written the book at all. "The affair gains upon us," as Mr. Stephen truly says, "because it is not a development of her previous aspirations, but suddenly throws a fresh and unpleasant light upon her character." To Anna, Wronsky was at least the antithesis of a husband she disliked and despised. Maggie succumbs to a temptation which ought to have been no temptation at all. George Sand, in whose stories of French country life Mr. Stephen finds the nearest parallel to "*Silas Marner*," would never, with all her occasional wildness, have committed such a mistake as that. Her taste was better than her morality. George Eliot's morality was better than her taste. A comparison between the two authors could only be a contrast. George Sand, as Mr. Stephen puts it, "poured forth novels with amazing spontaneity and felicity," while "each of George Eliot's novels was the production of a kind of spiritual agony." George Sand seems to have been born with a style. George

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Eliot acquired a command of language and a large vocabulary, by the process of translating Strauss and Feuerbach into English. But lightness and ease she never attained. Perhaps, if they are not innate, they are unattainable. It is impossible to deny that George Eliot wrote good English. She was apt to write it as a good classical scholar writes Latin prose.

Nothing can be better, or more lifelike, than Mr. Stephen's account of the formidable receptions held by George Eliot in the sixties at the Priory, Regent's Park. As he justly observes of all such ceremonies, "the shyness generated by the desire to prove that your homage is genuine, and that you are so brilliant a person that it is also worth having, gives one of those painful sensations which is not least among the minor miseries of life." Perhaps it is not absolutely necessary to be quite so self-conscious. But George Eliot allowed herself to be enthroned as a sibyl and approached by humble admirers in a reverential attitude. It may have been very good for them. It was certainly very bad for her. She was weighed down with a sense of responsibility for the message which she must deliver to mankind. It became essential that

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she should write poetry, and she wrote "The Spanish Gypsy." There are some noble lines in "The Spanish Gypsy," as, for instance :—

"The saints were cowards who stood by to see  
Christ crucified : they should have flung themselves  
Upon the Roman spears, and died in vain—  
The grandest death, to die in vain."

That is a paradox of course. But I cannot agree with Mr. Stephen in regarding it as mere nonsense. The grandeur is the complete sacrifice of self, and that is increased by the absence of any return or reward. The fatal objection to "The Spanish Gypsy," and to all George Eliot's poems, is that, save for a few lines here and there, they might as well, or better, have been written in prose. Verse was to her a laborious exercise. She did not publish any till she was forty-four. It may safely be said that good poetry is only written by those to whom verse is the most natural vehicle for their thoughts. "I lisped in numbers, for the numbers came," said Pope, and Horace said much the same thing before him. Forty-four is an age for ceasing to write poetry, not for beginning. But George Eliot is put by Mr. Stephen in good company. He is a master of the art known as damning with

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faint praise. "If," he writes, "'The Excursion' is undeniably dull, it is still a work which, in spite of all critical condemnations, has profoundly impressed the spiritual development of many eminent persons."

"Glory beyond all glory ever seen  
By waking sense, or by the dreaming soul.  
The appearance, instantaneously disclosed,  
Was of a mighty city, boldly say  
A wilderness of building, sinking far  
And self-withdrawn into a boundless depth  
Far sinking into splendour—without end.  
Fabric it seemed of diamond and of gold,  
With alabaster domes, and silver spires,  
And blazing terrace upon terrace high  
Uplifted ; here serene pavilions bright  
In avenues disposed ; there towers begirt  
With battlements that on their restless points  
Bore stars—illumination of all gems."

Undeniably dull, deserving critical condemnation, but conducive to the spiritual development of eminent persons? Of course Mr. Stephen did not mean that his words should be applied to the passages of ideal splendour in which "The Excursion" abounds. He meant that the poem was dull as a whole, and cast, as it is, in a form which has prevented it from becoming as popular as "The Lady of the Lake" or the "Idylls of the King." No critic has written of Wordsworth

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with more appreciative enthusiasm than the author of "Hours in a Library." It is not from him that we expect a repetition of Jeffrey's too famous verdict. If there were an ochlocracy in literature, the multitude might not disagree with Jeffrey. But from Mr. Stephen one looks for better things. He, if any man, is qualified to show that "The Excursion" stands in the front rank, the small but splendid rank, of philosophical poems; that it must be read as a whole, and that only those who read it as a whole can fully appreciate the magnificence of the "purple passages" which even Jeffrey could admire.

One of those true readers was George Eliot, whose early books, especially "Silas Marner," abound in Wordsworthian touches. "Silas Marner," and "Adam Bede," and "Scenes of Clerical Life," and "The Mill on the Floss" need no vindication. If they are not so much read as "Guy Mannering," or "David Copperfield," or "Vanity Fair," their permanent place in English literature is fixed as securely as theirs. Of "Romola" and "Middlemarch" as much cannot, I suppose, be said, while "Felix Holt" and "Daniel Deronda" are almost forgotten. To the merits, the undoubted merits, of Felix the fanatic, and

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Daniel the prig, Mr. Stephen does ample justice. Upon "Romola," the historical novel, and "Middlemarch," the novel of manners, he is, I cannot help thinking, unduly severe. If "Romola" be compared with the masterpieces of Sir Walter Scott in the same line, with "Waverley," or "Old Mortality," or "The Fortunes of Nigel," it appears cold and tame. As an historical novelist Scott has neither equal nor second. Even the brilliancy and the beauty of "Esmond," that strongest of all literary imitations, are as moonlight unto sunlight and as water unto wine. "Romola" is full of faults. The learning is too obtrusive. There is too much and too obvious an effort at minute historical accuracy, which is the mint and anise and cummin of every historical romance. Romola herself, though a portrait lovingly drawn, is hardly a creation of flesh and blood. But, in spite of Mr. Stephen, I respectfully maintain that the figure of Savonarola stands out in almost startling reality, and that Tito Melema is absolutely true to life. It may be that, as Mr. Stephen says, he is half a woman. He is not the only man with that moiety in his composition. He is, so far as a foreigner can judge, intensely Italian, and deserves a place in the "Purgatory" of Dante



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When we have reached the end of the book, and can survey his career as a whole, we are apt to pronounce him incredibly base. But for each separate action of Tito's there is always some plausible excuse, and he cannot be convicted of any crime unexplainable by weakness of character or by coldness of heart. Bishop Creighton, in one of those penetrating and fascinating lectures which no one else could give, warned his hearers not to overestimate the importance of Savonarola. An undue regard for the value of history is not perhaps the besetting sin of the present generation. Dr. Creighton was endowed with a double portion of the iconoclastic spirit, which in him was half stimulated and half checked by a passionate love of historic truth. The man in the street is not likely to injure himself or others by thinking too much about Savonarola. George Eliot does not conceal the frailties of the Florentine monk. He was ambitious; he meddled with matters too hard for him; he was a better Christian than Florentine. He had not the wisdom of Erasmus, nor the force of Luther; but when he said that he would not "obey the devil" in the person of Alexander the Sixth he did more for the honour of Christendom than the worst of the Popes had

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done for its discredit. "If we can put aside the historical paraphernalia," Mr. Stephen tells us, "forget the dates and the historical Savonarola and Machiavelli, there remains a singularly powerful representation of an interesting spiritual history;" in short, the story of Romola herself. The private taste or caprice of the individual reader may indulge itself in the amusement of treating books after this arbitrary fashion. But George Eliot herself always insisted that "Romola" must be taken or left as it was, and this is surely a choice she was entitled to make. "Romola" is not a smooth tale, chiefly of love. It is a serious attempt to depict Florentine life four hundred years ago, and by its success or failure in achieving that object it must stand or fall.

Five-and-twenty years ago, when George Eliot was still alive, Mr. Swinburne published an exuberantly eloquent and passionately enthusiastic eulogy of Charlotte Brontë. Not content with praising his idol, whom indeed it would be difficult to overpraise, Mr. Swinburne bestowed some rather stern, though not unfounded, censure upon the novelist whom he chose to take as her rival. He had been moved to this entertaining and thoroughly

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characteristic essay partly by Sir Wemyss Reid's excellent monograph, and partly by a rather stupid remark in *The Spectator* not worth reproducing at this distance of time. Dipping into the future, he predicted that Charlotte Brontë would be read by a discerning public with enjoyment and delight when "Daniel Deronda" had gone the way of all waxwork, when Miss Broughton no longer came up as a flower, and Mrs. Oliphant had been cut down like the grass. Miss Broughton still flourishes like the bay-tree, and Mrs. Oliphant's death was mourned by myriads of readers. But George Eliot is no more to be judged by "Daniel Deronda" than Charlotte Brontë is to be judged by "The Professor." Charlotte Brontë was one of those whom the gods love. She died young, which, as Miss Austen says, is an excellent clearer of ill fame. One may agree with Mr. Swinburne in thinking that she had more natural genius than the author of "Middlemarch," and yet think "Middlemarch" a very great book. Miss Brontë's style at its best is scarcely to be surpassed in the English prose of the nineteenth century. There are passages, for instance, in "Villette" to which the word "inspiration" may without

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pedantry be applied. George Eliot's style, though sometimes beautiful with a grave and dignified beauty, never rises above a certain level. She never really lets herself go. Most people would probably agree with Mr. Stephen's coldly judicious estimate of "*Middlemarch*." He seems to have at the back of his mind a conviction that books ought not to be written at all, but that, as they are, one must try not to exaggerate their importance, and yet to say what one can for them. He can say for "*Middlemarch*" that "it is clearly a work of extraordinary power, full of subtle and accurate observation; and gives, if a melancholy, yet an undeniably truthful portraiture of the impression made by the society of the time upon one of the keenest observers, though upon an observer looking upon the world from a certain distance, and rather too much impressed by the importance of philosophers and theorists." This view is not quite consistent with the opinion, also held by Mr. Stephen, that the moral of "*Middlemarch*" is to do your work well and not to bother about ideals. But, consistent or inconsistent, if it be correct, there seems to be no particular reason why anybody should ever read "*Middlemarch*" again.

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I must confess, though the confession may invalidate my judgment, that I cannot look at "Middlemarch" in the light of cold reason at all. I remember too well the hungry, boyish appetite with which I devoured the green paper volumes in which it successively appeared. Celia's dislike of hearing Mr. Casaubon eat his soup, and her wonder whether Locke had a mole on his forehead, were, I think, to be quite candid, a welcome relief after the faultless Dorothea's ideal aspirations. But Dorothea's unhappy marriage, and the misfortune of Lydgate coming too late, and the irresponsible Ladislav sprawling on Rosamond's hearthrug, and Mr. Casaubon's pathetic hunt after the key to all mythologies, and Mr. Brooke's universal sciolism, which never carried him too far, and Mr. Borthrop Trumbull's pomposity, and Mrs. Cadwallader's wit, were all delightful, as to me they are delightful still. And what a wonderful character is Caleb Garth! Mr. Stephen calls him a "pale duplicate" of Adam Bede. To me he seems an entirely fresh creation, and in many ways Adam's superior. He is the type of the strong, silent, capable man, who can act but not talk, the perfection of British energy and modesty, resembling that far older

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class concerning whom the son of Sirach says that they are not found where parables are spoken, but they maintain the state of the world, and all their desire is in the work of their craft. In absolute contrast to him stands Mr. Brooke, who can talk but not act; "such a leaky fool," as Lydgate says, always ready to take up his parable at a moment's notice on any conceivable subject, with the genial preface, "I went into that at one time, you know." "Wordsworth now, I knew Wordsworth." "Virgil?" But Mr. Brooke reflected just in time that with the Laureate of Augustus he could not claim acquaintance. He did not shine at the election meeting "with a glass of sherry hurrying like smoke through his ideas." On a private occasion he was never wanting; with the small change of conversation he was amply provided, and he had a subtly mysterious instinct for not being a bore. Bulstrode, the sanctimonious and fraudulent banker, is more conventional. Yet, as we are reminded, he was not one of those coarse hypocrites who consciously affect beliefs and emotions for the sake of gulling the world. He believed in himself. He had his point of view. The sixth commandment in Clough's "Latest Decalogue" exactly describes the extent to

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which he would go in contravening the moral law—

“Thou shalt not kill, but need'st not strive  
Officiously to keep alive.”

His dull wife, who became heroic when her husband was in the dust, is a beautiful example of the way in which George Eliot could ennoble the sordid and the commonplace. Old Featherstone the miser is not a pleasant picture, but he is marvellously vivid, with his almost pathetic inability to go to sleep in church. His conclusion from long attendance upon divine worship was the very mundane one that God Almighty stuck to the land, making folks rich with corn and cattle. He was an ignorant and graceless old sinner, but as real as Sir Peter Crawley, and less disgusting. The courtship of Fred Vincy and Mary Garth is delightful in its simplicity, tempered by humour. Mr. Farebrother, though not quite such an attractive clergyman as Mr. Gilfil or Mr. Irwine, is admirable in his geniality, his independence, and his thirst for knowledge. Dorothea and Mr. Casaubon are comparative failures. They are supposed to have nothing in common, but they have the common element of

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stupidity. "No man is the wiser for his learning," said one of the most learned men in a learned age. But even Mr. Casaubon's learning is sham, and he could not have imposed upon a really intellectual girl. As for Dorothea, she might have been a good listener to a clever husband, but her own remarks are vapid in the extreme. "Middlemarch" contains an inordinately large number of characters, and yet every one of them is distinct, and most of them the reader feels that he must have personally known. Mr. Stephen desiderates "a closer contact with the world of realities." Unhappy marriages are real enough, and there are two in "Middlemarch." He would also have "less preoccupation with certain speculative doctrines." The chief speculators in "Middlemarch" are Mr. Casaubon and Mr. Brooke. Both are held up to ridicule and contempt. Lydgate's researches are purely biological, and eminently suitable to his profession. If "Middlemarch" be not read, the world, even the world of realities, is the loser.

Like all sound judges of good literature, George Eliot was a warm admirer of Henry Fielding. She envied him the leisure, the days of slow-ticking clocks, when he wrote his



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introductory chapters. But Fielding was no dawdler. He died before he was fifty, leaving behind him four novels of the highest order, besides plays which are no longer read. George Eliot lived to be sixty, and survived the freshness of her imagination, though not the vigour of her intellect. Daniel Deronda's proper place is, as Mr. Swinburne says, over the rag-shop door. He is a pale reflexion of the brilliant and fascinating man with whom Mr. Stephen compares him. But to my mind there is all the difference in the world between "Daniel Deronda" and "Middlemarch." "Middlemarch" is George Eliot's climax, and those who depreciate it are really depreciating the author as well as the book. "Middlemarch" is her "Vanity Fair," her "David Copperfield," her "Heart of Midlothian." If you do not like the "Heart of Midlothian," you do not like Scott. If you do not like "David Copperfield," you do not like Dickens. If you do not like "Vanity Fair," you do not like Thackeray. If you do not like "Middlemarch," you do not like George Eliot. "Adam Bede" may be more amusing, "The Mill on the Floss" may be more pathetic, "Silas Marner" may be more poetical. But "Middlemarch" is George Eliot herself, with her large, grave, earnest,

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tolerant view of human nature and human life. It is pervaded by the melancholy of a reverent, regretful scepticism which surrenders with reluctance a store of cherished beliefs. It is impressed with the value of a scientific education and the futility of mere antiquarianism. It brings out more than any ostensibly political novel that I know the rooted and ingrained conservatism of the English character. It exposes, or endeavours to expose, the inadequacy of political reforms, being in that respect a completion of "Felix Holt." But these are its superficial aspects, like Mr. Partridge's contempt for Garrick, or the French proclivities of Squire Western. The types which it is the fashion nowadays to call 'human documents' abound in "Middlemarch." The growth of an intellectual passion in Lydgate from the day when he discovered that the valves of his heart were folding doors is not really disturbed by his passing fancy for the woman he marries. Yet no other English novelist has drawn with more consummate skill the mastery which may be achieved by the weak over the strong if the strong be of Samson's sex and the weak of Delilah's. "Drop heart's blood where life's wheels grate dry," says Browning, in that wonderful poem which compresses a novel of three

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volumes into a score of stanzas. Dorothea Brooke does that, and perhaps deserves no pity for doing it, inasmuch as Mr. Casaubon is neither a Milton nor a Locke, nor even, as some surmised, a Mark Pattison. But her illusion and her disillusionment are portrayed with the sure touch of a master without the exaggeration which provokes incredulity. Mr. Brooke is no doubt a caricature. Yet he only says in plain English, and in a crude form, what many people say in an indirect and round-about manner. That human reason—or is it logic?—will carry you too far, over the hedge in fact, if you don't pull up, has formed the staple of many speeches and of more conversation. I met Mr. Brooke myself once. It was before "Middlemarch" appeared, at the time of the match-tax, and he undertook to explain, for the benefit of the ladies present, the meaning of Mr. Lowe's celebrated motto, *ex luce lucellum*. "*Ex luce*, from light," he said; "*lucellum*, a little light." We all felt what a witty man Mr. Lowe was, and how valuable was a classical education. Celia and Sir James Chetham and Fred Vincy are as natural studies in flesh and blood as the infinitely varied gallery of English fiction contains. Of Bulstrode I have already spoken. He and his relations

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with Raffles are the one touch of melodrama in the book, unless old Featherstone may be considered melodramatic when he throws his stick at Mary Garth. But the state of Bulstrode's own mind, the arguments by which he half convinces himself of his own innocence, and quite persuades himself that other people are worse, would be intolerable if the art were a shade less perfect. "When immortal Bunyan makes his picture of the persecuting passions bringing in their verdict of Guilty, who pities Faithful? That is a rare and blessed lot which some greatest men have not attained, to know ourselves guiltless before a condemning crowd—to be sure that what we are denounced for is solely the good in us. The pitiable lot is that of the man who could not call himself a martyr even though he were to persuade himself that the men who stoned him were but ugly passions incarnate—who knows that he is stoned, not for professing the right, but for not being the man he professed to be." If it is superfluous to pity Faithful, it is difficult to pity Bulstrode. But George Eliot succeeds, as perhaps no one else could have succeeded, in conveying by suggestion, not by assertion, that the contrast between the banker's religion and his frauds was not really greater than the gulf

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which separates the ordinary practices of society from its professed and conventional creed.

Fielding had a richer, racier humour than George Eliot. He had mixed more with all sorts and conditions of men. He wrote an incomparably better style. But since "Tom Jones," "that faithful picture of life and manners," there has been no English novel painted, so to speak, on larger canvas with a broader brush than "Middlemarch." George Eliot might have said with Juvenal:—

"Quidquid agunt homines, votum, timor, ira, voluptas,  
Gaudia, discursus, nostri est farrago libelli."

To her all classes were alike. Middlemarch is no more than a country town, and Lydgate no more than a country doctor. It was the human nature in people, not their social position, for which she cared. Her displays of learning were not always happy. Cicero was not, as she supposed when she wrote "Romola," in the habit of ending his sentences with the words *esse videtur*. She could no more have described the Homeric battle in which Molly Seagrim suffers so severely than she could have written "Hamlet." She lives not by her learning but by her sympathy, not by her science but by her imagination, not by her

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positivism but by her humour. Her allusions to Aristotle, her digressions on Bichat, have done her more harm than good. They come from George Henry Lewes, who wrote a "History of Philosophy" to prove that there was no such thing, and described the physiology of common life in such an uncommon way that it ceased to be recognisable by physiologists. Mr. Stephen complains that the law of "Felix Holt," for which Mr. Frederic Harrison was responsible, is too good. But it is not too good to be true, and a "base-fee" is not a very recondite branch of jurisprudence. We are all of us interested in law, for we never know when we may suffer from it. Clarissa Harlowe suffered from the want of it, and none of Richardson's contemporaries seemed to feel the strangeness of the complete licence enjoyed by Lovelace a hundred years after the Habeas Corpus Act. There is always something uncivilised in pure romance. "Clarissa" and "Middlemarch" are, I fear, almost equally unfashionable now. To resuscitate "Clarissa," a work of sheer genius, if ever there was one, seems to be beyond the spells of even a literary magician like Mr. Leslie Stephen. But I cannot help thinking that his delightful book will send many readers

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back to the author of "Middlemarch," and in the long run to "Middlemarch" itself. I plead guilty to being an enthusiast, and enthusiasm often defeats its own object by exaggeration. Mr. Stephen is a calm, judicious, and impartial critic, whose praise is all the more valuable for being economically bestowed. It may be said, of course, that good wine needs no bush, and that if George Eliot's own merits do not revive her reputation nothing else can. That is plausible, but it is not quite true. If ever a novelist deserved immortality, it was Jane Austen. Yet it is an undoubted fact that Macaulay's posthumous testimony to her inimitable excellence, published in his biography, ran up the sale of her books at once. That was enthusiasm, no doubt, but then it was Macaulay's. Mr. Stephen attributes to George Eliot "a singularly wide and reflective intellect, a union of keen sensibility with a thoroughly tolerant spirit, a desire to appreciate all the good hidden under the commonplace and narrow, a lively sympathy with all the nobler aspirations, a vivid insight into the perplexities and delusions which beset even the strongest minds, a brilliant power of wit, at once playful and pleasant, and, if we must add, a rather melancholy view of life in

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general, a melancholy which is not nursed for purposes of display, but forced upon a fine understanding by the view of a state of things which, we must admit, does not altogether lend itself to a cheerful optimism." No one can say that this is unqualified praise. Every one must admit that it is very high praise indeed. Mr. Stephen knows well, for he has quoted in his "Life of Fawcett" the noble lines—

"There is a soul of goodness in things evil,  
Would men observingly distil it out."

George Eliot might have taken them for her motto, and she might have shared them with Count Tolstoi. There is much in "Resurrection" which recalls George Eliot. That wonderful and beautiful book is bolder than a woman, or at least an Englishwoman, could well venture to be. It sets at nought all institutions and conventions. It is built upon the roots of things and the religion of Christ. But in its breadth and its humanity, in the depth of its feeling, in the vividness of its satire, and in the width of its charity, it resembles George Eliot at her best, the George Eliot of "Middlemarch." After all, the proper study of mankind is what Pope said it



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was. As Lady Mary Wortley put it, the only two sorts of people are men and women. Circumstances are no more than clothes, and have even less efficacy of concealment. The true artist, be he painter or writer, divinely through all hindrance finds the man. Because George Eliot did this, as Tolstoi does it, her work is sure to be permanent, and the eclipse of her popularity must pass away.

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THE vote of the Oxford Congregation retaining Greek as a compulsory subject for a pass degree is not likely to be permanent.

The majority was not large, and it is seldom that great universities adopt serious changes in a hurry. But modern Oxford is full of the intellectual restlessness which mental vigour begets, and is more liable than it ever was before to the pressure of the outer world. Now the outer world are only too apt to agree with the opinion of Bismarck, recorded by Busch, that Russian is quite as difficult as Greek, and much more useful. The question might well be left to practical educationalists, as instructors of youth are now called, if only they were unanimous. But when we find the Headmaster of Eton and the Headmaster of Marlborough taking diametrically opposite views, an ordinary citizen who has conjugated the verb "to teach" only in its passive mood is emboldened to express his views. I venture, therefore, to say that I do not believe the study of Greek would suffer if it were made voluntary. When Bishop Thirlwall was

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told that at Cambridge, of which he was so illustrious an ornament, the choice lay between compulsory religion and no religion at all, he replied: "The distinction is too subtle for my mental grasp." It is, no doubt, true that Greek has been well and effectively taught to unwilling pupils. But it may also be true that the amount of Greek acquired by a passman at Oxford, or a passman at Cambridge, is not worth the time bestowed upon the acquisition. On the other hand, the removal of compulsion would not leave Greek to stand upon its own merits and the disinterested enthusiasm of heaven-born students. It would still lead to posts of honour and emolument even in this world. There would still be classical scholarships and classical fellowships, and similar incentives to those who had not the sacred thirst of Browning's Grammarian. Latin, like French, is a necessity. Greek, like German, is a luxury. The late Lord Coleridge used to say that if mankind were sharply divided into an educated and an uneducated class, he supposed he should be in the educated one. He was an accomplished scholar in the old-fashioned sense of the word. Total ignorance of French, or of Latin, is hardly compatible with education as now un-

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derstood. They belong to the common knowledge of cultivated persons in all civilised communities. Almost every word in the last sentence is Latin in its origin. Of course, a eulogy of the electric telegraph is as Greek, good or bad, as a prophylactic against dyspepsia, a diatribe against anarchy, as the hypothesis of amnesty, as a political panacea, the thesis that philosophic despotism is utopian, the hydrostatic paradox, the polygamous prophet. But Latin words are a natural element in even vernacular English, and Greek words, though acclimatised, are intruders. Grote's endeavour to appropriate them was unsuccessful. As Macaulay said before the days of Newnham and Girton, if a young lady were to read that Alcibiades won the favour of the Athenian people by the novelty of his theories and the expensiveness of his liturgies, she would get a very inaccurate idea of Greek history. Nowadays she would, of course, know that a theory in this connection was an embassy, and a liturgy a public office. A knowledge of Latin is essential for every lawyer, for every doctor, for every man of letters, of science, or of affairs. Latin has been, since the days of the Roman Republic, a sort of universal language. It never entirely

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died out, even in the dark ages. Greek for several centuries absolutely disappeared from the world. Dante could not read Aristotle, "the master of them that know," in the original tongue. Petrarch knew nothing and could know nothing of Theocritus. Erasmus in the sixteenth century was denounced as a heretic for editing the New Testament in the language in which almost the whole of it was composed. *Omne ignotum pro hæretico*. Latin was always orthodox because it never had to be rediscovered.

The Renaissance, a beautiful name for a beautiful thing, not harsh and pedantic like Renascence, was the revival or new birth of learning which succeeded the obscurity of the Middle Ages, when ignorant armies clashed by night. Perhaps the best account ever given of that wonderful movement which has never died out, because it permanently reconnected the ancient with the modern world, is Sir Richard Jebb's chapter in the first volume of the "Cambridge Modern History." The ease, grace, and purity of Sir Richard's style are not more excellent, though they may be more attractive, than the masterly condensation and artistic proportion of the narrative. It is a fortunate accident that this exhaustive essay should have

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appeared just when the place of Greek in education had come within the range of practical debate. The Renaissance exhibited Greek once for all as the fount and origin of Western culture, the "force and potency," to adopt Tyndall's words, of every form of intellectual life. Latin, on the other hand, occupied then, as it occupies now, a different position. The elegant trifles in which such scholars as Cardinal Bembo indulged, the tortured Ciceronianism which Erasmus, most Ciceronian of writers, afterwards turned into ridicule, did not represent the real value of Latin. Even the beautiful verses of Petrarch in the fourteenth and of Politian in the fifteenth century were froth on the surface of modern Latinity. Latin was then an instrument of government, the language of affairs, the recognised means of communication between the educated classes of Europe. Of course it is not that now. But it is embedded in history, the records of the past can scarcely be understood without it; it is the foundation of French and Spanish, as well as of Italian, and to write English prose without the use of Latin words is a misdirected effort of ingenuity. Sir Richard Jebb tells us that the classical Renaissance had two

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aspects. "In one," he says, "it is the recovery of a lost culture; in another, of even higher and wider significance, it is the renewed diffusion of a liberal spirit which for centuries had been dead or sleeping." Two aspects, not two parts; for parts are separable, and aspects are not. The culture lost and regained included the spiritual freedom which had been buried with it. If one may say so without irreverence, where the spirit of the Greeks is, there is liberty. "To be free, to understand, to enjoy," were declared by an acute and original philosopher, Thomas Hill Green, to be the claims of modern thought. No words could better express the attitude of Greek mind and character in the palmy days of Athens. The great men of the Renaissance found something more, something higher, than literary beauty in the Greek manuscripts which they deciphered, collated, and edited. They discovered the passionate enthusiasm for freedom, not for the mere absence of outward restraint which may leave men inwardly slaves, but for the conscious exercise of the mental faculties upon the problems of life and mind. Liberty has always by some persons been abused. If it could not be abused, it would not be liberty. The abuse was copied as well

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as the use, and there is a side of the Renaissance almost wholly evil. The *exemplaria Græca* are *vitiis imitabilia*. You may reproduce the faults, and only the faults, of the Greek models. But do not blame the Greeks, though they be not as blameless as the Ethiopians. As well complain of writing because it enables men to forge cheques, or of arithmetic because without it they could not cook accounts.

The Renaissance succeeded to the scholastic philosophy, upon which minds of the highest order had wasted their strength. By applying Aristotelian logic to patristic theology they had put the match to the magazine and blown the entire structure into the air. Humanism went back to nature and truth, to knowledge, to culture, and to instinct. It took the course which is taken in actual education at the present day, by approaching Greek through Latin, by going, like Alice, behind the looking-glass. If we abstract from Latin poetry of the first class that which is not Greek in its origin, we shall be left with little except the Satires of Juvenal. It is otherwise, no doubt, with Latin prose. Yet Cicero's philosophical treatises are avowed imitations of Plato, and his letters teem with scraps of Greek at which Plato



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would have stared in amazement. That was the Greek of Cicero's own time, and Cicero quoted it as we should quote French. But he would have been proud, not ashamed, of the fact that he adopted the Athenians as his masters. That Greece conquered her Roman conquerors is the tritest of Horatian commonplaces, and one of the few really musical hexameters Horace ever wrote describes the long duel in which Greece was engaged with barbarism.<sup>1</sup> The early and the late Renaissance are respectively typified by Petrarch and Politian. Petrarch was born in 1304, and died in 1374. He was an orthodox member of the Catholic Church, and one proof among many that the Renaissance is not as such pagan. An accomplished writer of Virgilian poetry, and in a less degree of Ciceronian prose, he studied hard, but unsuccessfully, to learn Greek. As Sir Richard Jebb points out, Greek could not then be acquired through Latin or Italian. A Greek teacher was necessary, and the Greek teachers of Constantinople had not in the time of Petrarch come to Florence. When they came they introduced Greek scholarship, which was also fostered by the visits of Italian students to Constantinople. Twenty years

<sup>1</sup> "*Græcia barbariæ lento collisa duello.*"

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after Petrarch's death, Manuel Chrysoloras arrived in Florence and gave lectures on the classical authors of Greece. Boccaccio knew a little Greek, and would have thoroughly appreciated Lucian, who endeavoured to reproduce in the decline of literature the Attic Greek of the past days. But Politian, whose short life was more than covered by the latter half of the fifteenth century, is the finest flower of the Renaissance. He translated four books of the "Iliad" into Latin when he was sixteen, and when he was eighteen he brought out an edition of Catullus, who is almost as Greek as Homer. The rhetorical genius of his Latin hexameters is highly praised by Sir Richard Jebb, a consummate judge. Yet even Politian was much better acquainted with Latin than with Greek, and was inclined to indulge in the paradox of putting Virgil above Homer. Not till the age of Erasmus and the great Venetian publisher Aldo, when the fifteenth century was passing into the sixteenth, did Greek acquire the position it has ever since maintained. The Aldine editions of the Greek classics began in 1493, and were continued till 1513, when they reached their climax in the famous Plato, dedicated to Pope Leo the Tenth. Sir Richard Jebb mentions the curious and interesting cir-

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cumstance that the Aldine type was cast from the handwriting of a Cretan named Musurus, as Porson in the eighteenth century furnished a model for the Cambridge type identical with the printed Greek of the present day.

The Aldine editions were as cheap as they were splendid, and from their appearance dates the general diffusion of Greek literature among the educated classes. The influence of Erasmus, first and greatest of Broad Churchmen, was powerfully exerted on the side of Christian humanism as opposed to monkish ignorance and to the prohibition of free inquiry. The modern scholar, with his luxurious apparatus of commentaries and lexicons, can but dimly imagine the poverty of the materials with which his predecessors in the time of Erasmus, or even in the time of Bentley, had to do their work. The prejudice against Greek as dangerous and unorthodox was finally dispelled by the wit and the irony, the piety and the learning of the "*Epistolæ Obscurorum Vironum*." The Renaissance in its largest and fullest sense was represented by Rabelais, Cervantes, and Shakespeare. The learning of Rabelais was as colossal as his humour, in which he is akin with Aristophanes. Cervantes embodies the triumph of the modern spirit

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over mediævalism. Shakespeare, if one may safely say anything of him except that he is universal, expressed the full and complete glory of intellectual freedom before the Puritan reaction set in.

Latin is a practical language, and a little of it sometimes goes a long way. No one who remembers the story of the apparition which Rab Tull, the Town Clerk of Fairport, saw in the Antiquary's Green Room will be disposed to undervalue even a smattering of that tongue. "Aweel," said Grizel Oldbuck, "Rab was a just-living man for a country writer, and he was less fear'd than maybe might just hae been expected; and he asked in the name o' goodness what the apparition wanted—and the spirit answered in an unknown tongue. Then Rab said he tried him wi' Erse, for he cam in his youth frae the braes of Glenlivat—but it wadna do. Aweel, in this strait, he bethought him of the twa or three words o' Latin that he used in making out the town's deeds, and he had nae sooner tried the spirit wi' that, than out cam sic a blatter o' Latin about his lugs, that poor Rab Tull, wha was nae great scholar, was clean overwhelmed." But he heard the word which, such was his erudition, he knew to be the

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Latin for paper, and the ghost of Aldobrand Oldenbuck guided him to the lost deed of which he was in search. This is the modern test of education. Will it be of use to you in after life? Let Latin then by all means be compulsory, for other reasons, and for that. After the age of academic honours and emoluments Greek, like good sense, is its own reward. No deed was ever discovered, no fortune was ever made, by means of a Platonic Dialogue. The pursuit of truth is not lucrative. Indeed, it has a tendency to draw men away from their proper business of making money. The teaching of Socrates was worth infinitely more than all the gold then or now existing in the bowels of the earth, and he died in poverty by the hand of the public executioner. In the Athens of the fifth century, which is what we mean by Greece, there were doubtless men of great practical wisdom. There was Pericles. There was Thucydides. There was Aristophanes. But intellectual versatility, not common sense, was the strong point of the Athenians. The Romans founded a vast empire, which has long since crumbled into dust. The Greeks produced a literature not very large in quantity, but infinitely precious in quality, which

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exercises at this moment a commanding influence over the thoughts and speculations of mankind. "What is the glory of Cæsar and Alexander to that?" It is the Latin writers who primarily testify to the intellectual supremacy of Greece. That such a man as Virgil, perhaps the most musical of all poets, should have been content to imitate first Theocritus, secondly Hesiod, and finally Homer, is a phenomenon without a parallel from the dawn of letters to our own time. Frederic Myers in his beautiful essay on the Mantuan poet, the finest tribute to him that I know except Tennyson's poem, shows how continuous through the ages have been the charm and power of Virgilian phrases and Virgilian melodies over the human heart and soul. John Henry Newman, imparting to the idea a Christian turn, speaks of the pathetic half-lines, giving utterance, like the voice of Nature herself, to that pain and weariness, yet hope of better things, which is the inheritance of her children in every clime. A greater than Newman, one of the three or four supreme poets vouchsafed by Providence to man, made Virgil the object of profound and reverent study. Yet Virgil, with all the matchless charm of his exquisite and inimitable verse,

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was no more an original poet than Cicero was an original philosopher, or Terence was an original playwright. Greece, to quote his own mighty line, had breathed on him with the winds of her lightning, and touched him with the finger of flame.<sup>1</sup> Terence, most graceful and elegant comedian, is now supposed to have simply translated Menander, unless, indeed, as some say, he was a mere amanuensis of the real translator, Scipio Africanus. Plautus, who wrote the purest and raciest vernacular, as became a slave born in the house,<sup>2</sup> is believed to have copied Diphilus and other Greeks as faithfully as Molière in the "*Amphitryon*" copied him. We think of Horace as the type of a Roman gentleman, and so he was. But his metres, his subjects, even the perfect style, of his Odes were Greek. That Catullus translated a poem of Sappho and a poem of Callimachus we know. How many other Greek poems he translated we do not know, but in all probability they were numerous. That sort of literary imitation is common enough, and in ordinary circumstances is hardly worth pointing out. But the peculiarity in this case is that the imitators and copyists were poets

<sup>1</sup> "*Fulminis afflavit ventis, et contigit igni.*"

<sup>2</sup> *Verna.*

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of the highest, or almost the highest, order, not mere versifiers, but men of genius. Yet so complete was the ascendancy of Greek poetry over their minds, that they copied it as a painter copies nature, and would have been equally at a loss without it. Virgil carried this form of devotion to quite a touching extreme. There is a line in one of his Eclogues which makes perfect nonsense, because he misunderstood the corresponding passage in Theocritus, and yet never doubted that, as it was Theocritus, it must be right. People who learn Latin cannot help learning Greek too. Richard Porson, as is well known, desired, and was content, to be remembered, as one who had done something for the text of Euripides. Yet Porson was much more than a merely learned man. His natural powers of mind were probably not inferior to Gibbon's or to Burke's. His wit was celebrated in a witty age, and he was almost as great a master of irony as Pascal. Every reader of the "Letters to Archdeacon Travis," most luckless of archdeacons, will admit that there have been few such writers of English as Porson. Painful and tragic circumstances obstructed the full development of his literary genius. He did not follow the example of



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the Greeks in putting water with his wine. But, though fully conscious of his intellectual strength, he never considered that he wasted it in collating the manuscripts of one Greek author. The suggestion that "your Porsons stain the purple they would fold," is preposterous as applied to Porson himself, whose reverence for the classics was as profound as his knowledge of their meaning, and his appreciation of their beauties. It cannot, of course, be proved that Porson was no product of compulsory Greek. He may have acquired his style and his handwriting in Long Chamber. But compulsion does not usually beget enthusiasm. There can be few scholars like Porson, though there can be many like Travis. It was compulsion which turned out that consummate philologist, the compiler of the Eton Greek Grammar, with his *ὅπως gaudet optativo*, justly described as the most striking instance of self-denial on record, inasmuch as that Greek preposition is almost always found in the company of the future indicative. The quantity and quality of the Greek required for a pass degree are responsible for such precious compounds as "sociology," and "automobile," for the notion that "Anglophobe" means one who hates England, and "Turcophile" one who loves

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Turkey; for the theory that a "Symposium" is a number of articles on the same subject, and for the belief, 'which seems to be widely prevalent, that Maranatha is a Greek adjective qualifying the Greek substantive Anathema.

When Sir Henry Maine said that "except the blind forces of Nature, nothing moves in this world which is not Greek in its origin," he is thought to have forgotten the Christian religion. But he might have replied, if the objection had been put to him, that at least the earliest forms of Christianity are Greek. He probably had in his mind Homer, the father of poetry; Herodotus, or, as I should rather say, Thucydides, the father of history; Plato, the father of philosophy, and Aristotle, the father of science. The influence of Aristotle, as may be gathered from Dante, was predominant when all knowledge of the language in which he wrote had disappeared from Western Europe. If the same cannot be said of Plato, it is nevertheless true that there would no more have been an Aristotle without a Plato than a Plato without a Socrates. By some odd and perverse mischance there has been formed from Plato's name the most unmeaning of English epithets, a prime favourite with bad writers in search

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of a word. But when Dr. Arnold said that he could understand Coleridge better if Coleridge would write Platonic Greek, he expressed, half unconsciously, the permanent power of an author who had been dead for 2300 years. He also illustrated the manner in which it is worth while to know Greek. A very slight knowledge of Latin is better than none. But to acquire a mere smattering of Greek is simply waste of time, and results in nothing, or in absurd derivations, of which "pancake" from *πάν κακόν* is scarcely a caricature. There is not the slightest danger of Greek dying out when it becomes a voluntary subject. Greek scholarship was never more exact or more profound in the English Universities than it is to-day, and certainly pass examinations, which alone are compulsory, have nothing to do with the matter. In the eighteenth century, a curious and not unlearned age, Greek was at rather a low ebb. Dr. Johnson's Latin scholarship, if not elegant, was sound, thorough, and robust. His Greek would scarcely carry him in these days through Smalls or the Little Go. Whatever Pope may have translated Homer from, it was not from the original. Voltaire loved the literature of Rome, and especially the "Bucolics" of Virgil.

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But to compare these with the "Idylls" of Theocritus was beyond his capacity. Carteret's acquaintance with Greek was considered portentous, even stranger than his faculty of talking German. Lady Mary Wortley was conspicuous, not only among her sex, but in her age, for her familiarity with the Greek as well as the Roman classics. Gibbon taught himself Greek, as he taught himself everything. But he was a miracle, for which the ordinary chain of sequences will not account. The vastness of Bentley's erudition cannot be denied, whatever may be thought of his taste. Yet Bentley himself seemed even more gigantic than he was when Boyle, and Atterbury, and Temple took an ostensibly serious part in a classical dispute. The range of Burke's reading, the amount of his acquirements, went far beyond Peel's, and were equal to Gladstone's. But his Greek scholarship was childish compared with Gladstone's or Peel's. Robert Lowe, who loved to depreciate classical learning, knew more Greek than all the unprofessional scholars of the eighteenth century, except Fielding and Gray. The poets have done more than the doctors to stimulate and perpetuate interest in the glory which was Greece, the grandeur which

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was Rome. Some of the attempts which have been made to convert ancient into modern poetry are indeed fanciful enough. A brilliant scholar and delightful essayist, Professor Sellar, amused himself and fascinated his readers by drawing an elaborate parallel between Catullus and Burns. It would be hard to say which was the greater genius of the two. For while the humour of Burns is infinitely above the coarse scurrility of the Roman poet, there is nothing in the love-songs of the Ayrshire peasant, exquisite as they are, to be set beside the intensity of passion and of despair which makes the verse of Catullus glow and scorch with unquenchable fire. Burns owed nothing to the classics nor to any one except the author of the "Gentle Shepherd." So far as originality is possible to man, he was original, while Catullus would have considered originality a sign or note of barbarism. He believed, as all Romans, including Veronese, of his time believed, in the verbal inspiration of Hellenic poetry. It is improbable that Burns had ever heard of Cynthia or of Sirmio. But yet it is easy to understand how Sellar came to think of them together. The resemblance between them, if resemblance there be, lies less in their sentiment, which with all its

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depth and fervour belongs also to other men of other times, than in the peculiar pathos, to be felt, not to be described, of such poems as that whose opening words are *Si qua recordanti*, and that whose closing lines are—

“ Had we never loved so kindly,  
Had we never loved so blindly,  
Never met, or never parted,  
We shouldna now be broken-hearted.”

Tennyson found for Catullus an even more illustrious similitude. With the instinct of critical genius he discovered an amplification of Catullus's noblest couplet<sup>1</sup> in one of Shakespeare's most glorious sonnets—

“ Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,  
For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,  
And weep afresh love's long-since cancelled woe,  
And moan the expense of many a vanished sight.”

Of Catullus we may certainly say that whatever he wrote, except mere expressions of personal love or hatred, was Greek in its origin. A great poet of the next generation after Burns, the author of the “Ode to a Grecian Urn,” which Wordsworth thought improper, was equally innocent of the languages

<sup>1</sup> “ Quo desiderio veteres revocamus amores,  
Atque olim amissas flemus amicitias.”

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foolishly called dead. But Keats, as all the world knows through his famous sonnet, fell in with one of those rare translations which preserve the spirit without neglecting the letter. There is not in English a finer rendering of Greek poetry than Chapman's "Homer," and the full, proud sail of his great verse carried Keats away. Mr. Rudyard Kipling, in the cleverest, because the most imaginative, of all his stories, tells how a modern English clerk addicted to scribbling trash is suddenly visited by the spirit of *ἀνάμνησις*, or reminiscence, and describes a naval battle of the Peloponnesian war, in which as a galley-slave he had been engaged. The soul of our grandam may haply have inhabited a bird, and many things, including the Baconian authorship of Shakespeare, are less likely than that Keats was once a Greek poet whose works have perished.

The scholars of the Italian Renaissance have been not unjustly accused of neglecting substance for style. No one, said Erasmus, would have felt more contempt for that brood of little Ciceronians than Cicero himself. The leading men, such as Politian, are not touched by this sarcasm, which may have suggested the brilliant picture of a learned squabble drawn

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by George Eliot in "Romola." Erasmus was a true child of the Renaissance, though as a Christian, a scholar, and a man of fastidious literary taste, he saw all its defects. Perhaps he was not sufficiently grateful to the men who, with all their faults, relit the extinct torch of Greek scholarship, handed down in uninterrupted succession, through Scaliger, Casaubon, Bentley, Porson, to our own day. "The greatest intellect that ever spent itself in the search for knowledge" is the judgment of Casaubon's biographer, Mark Pattison, upon a greater than Casaubon, the French or Italian Bentley, Scaliger. Bentley was a big man full of small foibles, and they may be seen set forth at large in the fascinating pages of his Life by Monk. His foibles are conspicuous in his reckless emendations of Horace (though some display real genius), his outrages upon the text of Milton, and his twenty years' war with the Fellows of Trinity. His full stature appears in the immortal treatise on the "Epistles of Phalaris," and may be seen at a glance by every one who takes the slight trouble of reading his short letter on Joshua Barnes's Homer. If the lives of the victims of great men ever find a chronicler, a place beside Chelsum, and Davies, and Travis, and Goezman, and Robert



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Montgomery must be given on account of Bentley to Boyle and Barnes. Barnes was a very good example of superficial scholarship. He was by no means an ignorant man. He knew enough to make blunders quite beyond the reach of a dunce, and to destroy the possibility of restoring a text by changes which were not merely absurd in themselves, but would, if adopted, have removed all chance of finding the proper emendation. It is not for a desultory amateur to affect contempt of sciolism, unless sciolism occupies the professorial chair. But as Barnes was to Bentley, so are the mechanical products of compulsory Greek to Barnes. If they were asked in the witness-box, as the Claimant was, what Greek they had read at school, they would probably not say "Cæsar." They would remember that Cæsar wrote a book for beginners in Latin. But an aversion from the sight of the Greek alphabet is the most definite result in many cases of ramming Greek syntax into unsympathetic minds. It is the same with mathematics. Mathematicians, like musicians, are born, not made, and are scarcely less to be envied. Astronomy is their plaything, and they have the instinct of exactitude. But the attempt to hammer mathematics into un-

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mathematical brains is useless torture, far worse than waste of time. Arithmetic is, no doubt, essential, and comes, more or less, by nature. But geometry is a mystery to thousands, and they can derive no benefit from it, except a slight improvement of the memory from learning Euclid by heart. There are certain beggarly elements, as St. Paul calls them, which must be common to all education worthy of the name. When they have been mastered, the sooner the literary and the scientific portions of the human race are allowed to separate, the better for both. If there is no water to which a horse cannot be brought, there is none which he can be made to drink.

That most learned and excellent scholar, the Rector of Lincoln, defending his recent vote in Congregation against compulsory Greek, declared the knowledge of it acquired by candidates for pass degrees to be absolutely worthless. Of course there is the remedy of raising the standard, and some would go so far as to abolish pass degrees altogether. But, on the whole, it seems more reasonable to recognise that Greek is an accomplishment, not an elementary subject, and that the noblest of all languages is degraded by administration in homœopathic doses to recalcitrant school-

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boys. From a merely philological point of view such smattering is useless, and it is even more alien to literature than to philology. That classical authors should be handled with reverence is, to put it no higher, a respectable superstition. But, on the other hand, the study of Greek is time thrown away unless it results in a familiarity with the style and idiom of the Greek writers from Homer to Theocritus, at least equal to an educated Englishman's acquaintance with French. Mr. Gilbert Murray's "Euripides," the third volume of Mr. George Allen's "Athenian Drama," is a good example of the way in which a Greek author may be treated by a real master of his subject, who can appreciate for himself, and present to others, the inward and spiritual meaning of ancient tragedy and comedy. Mr. Murray has adopted the unusual and rather startling plan of combining "The Bacchanals" and "The Hippolytus," two of the greatest extant plays Euripides produced, with that marvellous comedy "The Frogs," in which Aristophanes made fun of Euripides and everything Euripidean. "To some readers," he says in his Preface, "there may appear to be something irreverent in allowing two noble tragedies to be so closely followed by a hostile

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burlesque." But "The Frogs" is far more than a burlesque. It is the work of a poet as well as a satirist, of a man who, though full of what the French call *l'esprit Gaulois*, was steeped in all the culture of a highly cultivated age, and it contains more good literary criticism than many accredited treatises on the art. Mr. Murray calls it "preposterously unfair." A burlesque can hardly be fair, and when Aristophanes began to use his powers of sarcasm, he was apt to let himself go. The defence of Euripides is well worth undertaking, and few men are so well qualified to undertake it as Mr. Murray. But Aristophanes is not responsible for the dull pedants, mostly German, who have assumed that Euripides was a bad poet because the greatest of all parodists made game of his peculiarities. Aristophanes appreciated Euripides, if Schlegel did not, and Mr. Murray's brilliant translations will show even the unclassical reader the absurdity of the view that Euripides represents a dramatic decadence. Aristophanes was a ferocious Conservative, and he has lampooned Socrates as fiercely as Euripides, both being guilty of innovation, in his eyes the worst of crimes. But Aristophanes was not a man who would have wasted his strength on bad philosophers

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or bad poets. It was a battle of giants in which he fought, and his audacious satire did not spare Æschylus, whom, even on his own principles, he was bound to revere. No dramatist has raised more problems, or been the subject of more controversy, than Euripides. Dr. Verrall's paradoxical and almost supernaturally clever pamphlet, "Euripides the Rationalist," attributes to "sad Electra's poet" a Machiavellian subtlety not suspected by Aristophanes or Aristotle. The "Bacchanals" or "Bacchæ," translated by Mr. Murray, contains an unequalled representation of religious enthusiasm passing into religious madness. Yet it is equally possible to hold that Euripides meant to exalt the Bacchic frenzy, that he meant to decry it, or that his object was purely dramatic. The abiding interest of Euripides for critics of all nations and schools is a sufficient answer to the theory that he fell away from the standard of Æschylus and Sophocles. Which of the three was the greatest is a question that may be argued for ever. That they all belonged to the highest order of dramatic literature is a certain and incontestable truth. They differed, as Cicero says, in quality, not in degree, and it is strange that modern critics should have selected for ignorant dis-

paragement the most modern of that mighty trio. "Aristophanes' Apology" contains an eloquent and passionate defence of the tragic against the comic poet, put into the mouth of an Athenian lady who has endured the moral torture of sitting through a representation of the "Lysistrata." Her reminiscences are expressed with vigour, though with the prolixity of Browning's later style, which makes consecutive quotation impossible.

that bestiality—

So beyond all brute-beast imagining,  
That when, to point the moral at the close,  
Poor Salabaccho, just to show how fair  
Was 'Reconciliation,' stripped her charms,  
That exhibition simply bade us breathe,  
Seemed something healthy and commendable  
After obscenity grotesqued so much  
It slunk away revolted at itself."

Browning did not know Greek as Mr. Murray knows it. He was not a professional scholar nor a deeply learned man. But he had a robust and manly grasp of Greek literature, the fruit of voluntary study, which was always a labour of love. His estimate of

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Aristophanes was out of proportion because he put the accidental on a level with the essential, the coarseness which is on the surface with the poetry and humour which it sometimes overlays. Most English critics, with the great and signal exception of Coleridge, have made a similar mistake about Rabelais. The "*Lysistrata*" was certainly not a play for women to go and see. "*The Adventures of Pantagruel*" is perhaps not a book for them to read. Yet the real objects are in each case noble. With Aristophanes, it was the establishment of peace and goodwill among men. With Rabelais it was the emancipation of the human intellect from the trammels of monkish tyranny. But if Browning's love of Euripides made him unjust to the author of "*The Frogs*" and "*The Clouds*," it led him to a spirited vindication of his favourite poet against criticism often captious and sometimes absurd. His own poetry was not exactly Greek in finish, or in restraint. Yet the beautiful fragment which he called "*Artemis Prologises*" is strictly classical both in form and in substance. Dearly as Browning loved Euripides, he could not love him more than Milton did. Euripides was to Milton what Virgil was to Dante, and the

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admiration of Milton is conclusive for the English-speaking race. Milton's Greek and Latin verses are not distinguished for accuracy, elegance, or ease. But they are quite intelligible, and it illustrates the scholarship of the eighteenth century that to four Archilochian iambics inscribed by Milton under a bad portrait of himself, Warton appended the note, "a satire on the engraver, but happily concealed in an unknown tongue." The lines are not a satire at all, but plain, downright abuse of the unlucky artist, in remarkably bad Greek. Milton's Greek is most perceptible in his English; for instance, in that fine passage which Macaulay quotes as after the manner of Euripides—

"But wherefore thou alone? Wherefore with thee  
Came not all hell broke loose?"

It does not fall within Mr. Murray's province, more's the pity, to trace the influence of Euripides upon succeeding ages, from his own to the fall of the Western Empire and from the Renaissance to the present day. "Our Euripides, the human," wrote a gifted lady, who might have been a great poet if she could have made or avoided rhymes. "No one in modern times," says Dr. Verrall, "since Greek has been well understood, has



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said that his dearest desire beyond the grave would be to meet Euripides; not this nor anything like it," as, for example, that his dearest desire was to meet Euripides beyond the grave. But if no one has said this, Euripides has found modern admirers as competent and as diverse as Milton and Fox. The structure of his plays is faulty enough, unless we adopt the ingenious hypothesis of Dr. Verrall, and assume that ridicule of the supernatural is his secret purpose. But they abound in felicitous phrases, in lovely songs, in exquisite descriptions of natural beauty, in maxims of civic wisdom and political prudence. And there is something more in them than that. Among the causes of sudden and impressive influence upon sceptical minds enumerated by Bishop Blougram, coupled with—

“A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,”  
is—

“A chorus-ending from Euripides.”

Perhaps Browning was thinking of those wonderful lines put into the mouth of the Muse in the “Hippolytus”—

“But if any far-off state there be,  
Dearer than life to mortality;  
The hand of the Dark hath hold thereof;  
And mist is under and mist above.

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And so we are sick for life and cling  
On earth to this nameless and shining thing.  
For other life is a fountain sealed  
And the deeps below are unrevealed,  
And we drift on legends for ever."

The greatest of England's classical scholars, Richard Bentley, was not a man who undervalued his own countrymen, or even, that last infirmity of noble mind, his own contemporaries. It was he who wrote, and it was to Bishop Pearson he applied, the fine and striking phrase, "The dust of his writings is gold." When his favourite daughter, "Jug," lamented that her father's powers should be exclusively devoted to work which was not original, he acknowledged the justice of the complaint. "But," he added, with a simplicity and a modesty he did not often show, "the wit and genius of those old heathens beguiled me: and as I despaired of raising myself up to their standard on fair ground, I thought the only chance I had of looking over their heads was to get upon their shoulders." And upon their shoulders he stands. If one may reverse Porson's caustic judgment of Southey, Bentley's works will cease to be read when Homer and Virgil are forgotten. Monk, who was a college tutor before he became a dean and a

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bishop, tells us that pupils whom he referred to the "Dissertation on Phalaris" for some particular point of prosody or syntax, almost always read the book through. The native force of that powerful mind dealt with the vast learning it had accumulated as Adam Smith dealt with economic science, and Gladstone with financial policy. A little learning makes a pedant. It was not a real scholar who, preaching upon the subject of a new organ, told his congregation that the Greeks called the instrument τὸ ὄργανον. George Eliot used to cite Dean Milman,—author, by the way, of some of the most beautiful hymns in the English language—as a man to whom intimate acquaintance with the classics had not given a good style, and Dean Merivale, known as "Gibbon in slippers," would be an even better instance. But these examples are cited because they are rare. They prove the existence of the rule. There have been acknowledged masters of English prose who were wholly innocent of Greek. Shakespeare's prose is inferior only to his verse; the names of Bunyan and of Goldsmith will at once occur to every one. There is Cobbett, whom a famous scholar compared with Cleon, and the letters of Burns have a fiery eloquence

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of their own. Johnson, Byron, and Scott knew Greek chiefly, if not wholly, through Latin. Jane Austen and Charles Dickens did not know it at all. It is a commonplace that original genius can dispense with extraneous aid. If Fielding is to be reckoned above Richardson as a novelist, it is because he had a sense of humour, and not because his acquaintance with the "Iliad" enabled him to describe the battle in the churchyard. Fielding's English is so idiomatic, so stately, and so pure, that it seems to come straight from his own brain and soul; yet he himself confesses his debt to Lucian, who was not a real classic, but a conscious and deliberate imitator of a style which had not been written for hundreds of years. Since the loss of Athenian independence every institution then existing in the Western world has passed away; Greek literature itself perished, and had to be re-discovered. It fell under the ban of the Church as something outlandish, heretical, impious. Yet its influence upon the culture of civilised communities is greater now than it has ever been before, and [if the study ceases to be compulsory, it will be because no compulsion is needed, because Greek is a sixth sense.

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**A**MONG tales of whim and fantasy Peacock's novels, if so they can be called, have always held a high place. Equally removed from the problem and the proverb, they are still more unlike those pure works of art, such as Shakespeare's plays and Scott's romances, where the author stands aside altogether, and the characters are apparently left to develop themselves. Peacock follows his fancy whithersoever it leads him, and never continueth in one stay. He was as full of prejudices as an egg is full of meat, and he made his stories the vehicle for expressing them. The late Dean Merivale used to say that England had reached the summit of her greatness under a system of rotten boroughs and Latin elegiacs. To the Reform Bill and Greek Iambics he traced her gradual decline. Peacock, though he was so loose a scholar as to write Greek without the accents, seems to have believed that, if man did not live by bread alone, good wine and classical quotations were sufficient to guide him through this world of sin. He had not, like Merivale, the art of writing Latin verse. His verse is

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English, and excellent it is. He had not been through the mill of the University, or the public school. His scholarship was self-taught, and few men have taught themselves so well. But the Dean's doctrine was just the sort of theme with which he loved to play, and it would have enlivened his pages a good deal more than the perfectibility of man. For it is true of Peacock as of most eccentrics—that they are best when they are least serious, when they do not go much below the surface of things. Peacock was a humourist in the old sense of the term. He was essentially a queer fellow. Never, or hardly ever, did he deviate into the commonplace. The one thing certain about his conclusions is that they do not follow from his premisses. His books are as provoking as Lamb's "Essays" to well-regulated minds. He violates all the conventions, and sets at defiance all the rules. Few writers are so absolutely devoid of that common sense which, as Pennialinus says, is the saving of us all. No wandering sheep was ever brought back by Thomas Love Peacock to the intellectual fold. Wherein, then, lies his charm? The same statement might be made, and the same question might be asked, about Laurence Sterne. Peacock had not the profound humour and the

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subtle pathos which make "Tristram Shandy," with all its faults, immortal. Neither had he Sterne's love of indelicate allusions, nor his cynical disbelief in the virtue of women. What he had in common with Sterne was a fantastic imagination, not his servant but his master, for he could not choose but follow where it led.

His charm lies, however, not only in this, but also in his ripe scholarship, his lively wit, his caustic irony, and a style so exquisitely felicitous that at its best it has scarcely ever been surpassed. To which may be added a power of creating graceful, delightful, and perfectly natural girls, in which only Mr. Meredith has since surpassed him. Peacock is one of the very few men who can draw the other sex better than their own. Perhaps only Walter Scott and George Meredith are equally happy in both. Certainly Peacock's male characters cannot be called natural. They are for the most part types rather than individuals, except when celebrities like Shelley and Coleridge are deliberately caricatured. Peacock was as incapable as Sterne of constructing a plot. To read him for the story is like reading Gaboriau for anything else. Collections of his songs are popular enough, for his severest critic could not deny that he

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was a genuine poet. I saw it stated the other day that the true "Peacockians" only cared for the songs in their proper places. I dare not arrogate to myself that sebast and cacophonous title, as Peacock might have called it. But I love Peacock's songs, as I love Shakespeare's, wherever I find them, and I should not consider them out of place in an interleaved Bradshaw. Mr. Chromatic in "Headlong Hall" expressly maintains that the words of a song have no importance, except as a setting for the music, and his own performances are by no means always topical. Except in "Maid Marian," where everything is in perfect harmony with everything else, and the Friar leaves the room without a song when a song would have been inappropriate, Peacock's poetry occurs just because Peacock felt inclined to write it. And indeed no man ever wrote more exclusively to please himself than the author of "Crotchet Castle," unless it were the author of the "Sentimental Journey." "Those who live to please must please to live," said the austere moralist who died the year before Peacock was born. Literature was at the most Peacock's staff. His crutch was the India House, where he seems to have done as little work for his pay as he conscientiously could.



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His own lines on the subject are well known, and though they need not be taken as history they have a curious interest as coming from the successor of James Mill.

“From ten to eleven have breakfast for seven ;  
From eleven to noon think you’ve come too soon ;  
From twelve to one think what’s to be done ;  
From one to two find nothing to do ;  
From two to three begin to foresee  
That from three to four will prove a d—d bore.”

In Peacock’s pages, as in Sterne’s, every man rides his hobby. Uncle Toby was beyond Peacock, as Matilda, and even Marionetta, were beyond Sterne. The crudity of Peacock is seen in this, that his characters, at least his male characters, represent merely qualities or tendencies, and are seldom, as human beings, complete. They are always playing a part, never simply themselves, except under the influence of some sudden catastrophe, such as the appearance of a spectre, or bodily concussion with a tangible object, or the advent of a plentiful meal. Peacock was not so much an epicurean scholar as a scholarly epicure. He made of eating and drinking something very like a religion. The captain in “Headlong Hall” expresses an opinion that a man who abstains from strong drink must

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have a secret he is afraid involuntarily to disclose. The parson in "Melincourt," who undertakes to exorcise the ghost, requires the simple apparatus of a venison pasty, three bottles of Madeira, and a prayer-book. When he is found asleep in the morning, the bottles are empty, the pasty has disappeared, and the prayer-book is open where it was open before. When the lady guests of Squire Headlong faint at the sight of the skulls on Mr. Cranium's lecture-table, and call for water, the little butler brings them the only water he keeps, which is powerful enough to revive them at once. There are no "three bottle men" now. People do not reckon what they drink. "Heel-taps" and "Skylight" are obsolete terms. We do not breakfast in bed, like Dr. Folliott, on beer and cold pie, or say "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity," like Dr. Gaster when he turned up the empty egg-shell.

Peacock had a long life, and his novels are distributed over the greater part of it. He was seven years older than Shelley, and he survived Thackeray for three years. He lived into a world, as Professor Saintsbury says, "more changed from that of his youth than that of his youth was from the days of Addison

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or even Dryden." It was not merely the Reform Bill and Greek Iambics, which Porson had written before his time, or Merivale's. It was "the steamship and the railway, and the thoughts that shake mankind." His clergy and country gentlemen, his schoolmasters abroad and philosophers at home, had become before his death as obsolete as the guard who woke up the inside passengers in the night and claimed to be remembered. But for a satirist in the grain, as Peacock was, there is little real change. Human folly seems to obey the law known as the conservation of energy. The quantity of it remains identical or increases with the population. The forms of it alone vary from age to age. If there are no longer any rotten boroughs, there are constituencies in which both the sitting member and the standing candidate are expected to subscribe towards every charity and every football club. If there is no duelling in the army, and no flogging of private soldiers, there is mutual flagellation of officers and gentlemen among themselves. Champagne answers its purpose as well as Madeira, and at least two more meals have been added to the collection of Peacock, who seldom allowed for anything between breakfast and dinner. Scythrop and

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Mr. Flosky are no more. Mr. Swinburne and Mr. Herbert Spencer have never, so far as I am aware, been put into a novel. Perhaps the nearest approach in modern times to "Nightmare Abbey" is Mr. Mallock's "New Republic." But it is not a novel, and "Nightmare Abbey" is. Thin as the story may be, it is a story, and Scythrop's secret meetings with the object of his affections are most ingeniously arranged. Flosky is a rather cruel, extremely vivid representation of Coleridge. Scythrop is a not unkindly caricature of Shelley. The art of Peacock is shown in producing the impression that Scythrop was a caricature, and that Flosky was not. Sometimes his likenesses are coarse daubs enough, and the most sympathetic reader must be wearied by innumerable references to Lord Brougham as "the learned friend." It was natural enough that Peacock should have been disappointed with Brougham. Many others were so too. But the subject of Brougham's delinquencies, however attractive in itself, is not suited to works of fiction, nor, indeed, for that matter, is the duty of discouraging colonial slavery by not drinking sugar in tea, as recommended by Mr. Forester in "Melincourt." But even that is better than the attempt to humanise an

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ape by conferring on him clothes, a baronetcy, and a seat in Parliament.

Peacock passed his life in avoiding what was disagreeable. He was not ambitious, and he was neither physically nor mentally energetic. Writing was with him a luxury, an amusement, and a vehicle for conveying his peculiar prejudices to the world. They were very peculiar. He was in his way a keen politician, and yet to classify him would have taxed the ingenuity of Dod himself. There have been statesmen and writers, such as Palmerston and Bagehot, whom it would be equally misleading to call Liberal or Conservative. That is because they shunned extremes, or because they had one measure for foreign countries and another for their own. But Peacock held at the same time, and in reference to the same subject-matter, opinions which the utmost ingenuity cannot reconcile. Forgetting that there must be some method for choosing members of Parliament, he railed with equal severity at pocket boroughs and at Reform Bills. Now and then his whims and oddities quite destroy the whole effect of his books. "Melincourt" is an instance in point. It contains some of Peacock's most attractive writing, while *Anthelia Melincourt*, in spite of

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a tendency to priggishness, has sense and spirit enough. But Sir Oran Haut-ton is intolerable. A single scene in which a monkey played the part of a man might be endured in a roaring farce. But a man-monkey as one of the principal characters in a novel; getting drunk, falling in love, and being returned to the House of Commons, is ἀνο-μάλως ἀνόμαλος, purely grotesque, and an insult to the intelligence of the reader. Nor do the copious quotations from Lord Monboddo with which the notes to "Melincourt" are garnished remove the difficulty, or rather the impossibility, of accepting this zoological licence. Lord Monboddo's vagaries, though they have been described as anticipations of Darwin, are devoid of all scientific or philosophic value, while even the great name of Buffon cannot reconcile one to the preposterous and rather disgusting absurdity of an ape taking a lady in to dinner. The name of Sir Oran Haut-ton may be thought to deserve the praise of ingenuity. But if so, it can only be in comparison with Peacock's other efforts of the same kind. A worse inventor of names never devoted himself to the art of writing novels. Thackeray's names, though often ludicrous, are always happy, and often inimitably droll. That Lady

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Jane Sheepshanks should be the Earl of Southdown's daughter is so perfectly logical that it moves only the inward mirth of blissful solitude. The highly respectable family of the Newcomes have so long lost all trace of novelty that one forgets how the recency of their origin contrasted with the antiquity of Pendennis. How could The Mulligan have been called anything else, or what other appellation could the Fotheringay have chosen for herself than that which she actually adopted? What grim and stately mansion in the London of real life ever had such an appropriate title as Gaunt House? Sir Telegraph Paxarett and the Reverend Mr. Portpipe are enough to spoil the reputation even of a story with such a pretty name as "Melincourt." "Mr. Mystic of Cimmerian Lodge" shows an astounding poverty of invention. The intolerable pedantry which disfigured "Headlong Hall" with sham classical derivations for the patronymics of Foster, Escot, and Jenkison is an even surer proof than his slovenly habit of writing Greek without the accents that Peacock was not a scholar in the highest sense of the term.

Yet with all these drawbacks, which are better faced and acknowledged at the outset,

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there are few more fascinating novelists than Peacock. Perhaps "novelist" is hardly the word, for his plots are of the thinnest, and his tales are not exactly smooth. But his humour is of that delicious sort which must be felt and cannot be described; his style at its best was scarcely surpassed by his most illustrious contemporaries; his dialogue is almost equal to Sterne's; his passion for good literature was no stronger than his love of rural beauty; while his young women, though rather sketches than finished portraits, have a grace and a glamour which it is scarcely profane to call Shakespearean. As for the songs with which his books are interspersed, they are all excellent, and some of them are absolutely perfect. Peacock wrote only when he felt inclined, and, considering the length of his life, he wrote very little. His first novel, "Headlong Hall," appeared in 1816; his last, "Gryll Grange," in 1861, two years before his death. Dr. Richard Garnett, the accomplished editor of Peacock in succession to the late Sir Henry Cole, discerns symptoms of senility in "Gryll Grange." His eyes are better than mine. I must confess that I should have rather detected signs of failing power, of course erroneously, in "Melincourt" or



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"The Misfortunes of Elphin." Peacock was never, from the cradle to the grave, under the influence of reason. Perhaps we none of us are. But with him prejudice followed prejudice in an unbroken series which enabled him to see the ruin of the country in the reform of every abuse he had denounced.

Peacock was no friend to the clergy, and the Reverend Dr. Gaster of "Headlong Hall" is, as his name implies, a mere glutton. His brother divines, Dr. Folliott and Dr. Opimian, though good livers in the worst sense of that term, are also scholars and gentlemen. Dr. Gaster is as stupid as he is greedy, and represents the crudest shape of Peacock's undoubted gift for caricature. The Homeric capacity for eating and drinking exhibited by Peacock's male characters is not exceeded even in "Pickwick," where there seems to be no appreciable interval between one meal and another. Dr. Opimian, a strictly moderate man in Peacock's estimation, makes a large hole in a round of beef at breakfast, lunches on cold chicken and tongue, and only abstains from drinking more than two sorts of wine in the middle of the day lest he should spoil his zest for the bottles of Madeira and claret with which he washes down his copious dinner. But there is this

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difference between Peacock and Dickens. Peacock, at least the literary Peacock, was an epicure, and Dickens, at least the literary Dickens, was not. A good cookery book might be made out of Peacock's novels, especially if the dinners were reduced by one-half and the breakfasts by two-thirds. This, however, is by the way. The three things by which Peacock will live, for they make him as fresh now as he was seventy years ago, are his poetry, his humour, and his style. In "Headlong Hall" there is one capital poem, the song of which the first line is: "In his last binn Sir Peter lies." Take these two couplets as specimens—

"None better knew the feast to sway,  
Or keep mirth's boat in better trim;  
For nature had but little clay  
Like that of which she moulded him."

The humour of "Headlong Hall," not perhaps very obvious in the preliminary scene of the coach, full of humourists as that vehicle is, breaks out after dinner when Dr. Gaster quotes Moses to Mr. Escot.

"Of course, sir," replies Mr. Escot, "I do not presume to dissent from the very exalted authority of that most enlightened astronomer and profound cosmogonist, who had, more-

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over, the advantage of being inspired ; but when I indulge myself with a ramble in the fields of speculation and attempt to deduce what is probable and rational from the sources of analysis, experience, and comparison, I confess I am too often apt to lose sight of the doctrines of that great fountain of theological and geological philosophy.' ”

“ Knight On Taste,” unlike Moses and the Pentateuch, is forgotten, but his methods of forcing Nature into artificial shapes have not been so entirely abandoned that a reference to them will be unintelligible. Mr. Milestone had not carried out his plans for the improvement of Lord Littlebrain’s park when Miss Tenorina praised its beautiful appearance.

“ *Mr. Milestone.* Beautiful, Miss Tenorina ! Hideous ! Base, common, and popular. Such a thing as you may see anywhere in wild and mountainous districts. Now, observe the metamorphosis. Here is the same rock cut into the shape of a giant. In one hand he holds a horn, through which that little fountain is thrown to a prodigious elevation. In the other is a ponderous stone, so exactly balanced as to be apparently ready to fall on the head of any person who may happen to be beneath : and there is Lord Littlebrain walking under it.”

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The artificial school of landscape gardening has never been more happily hit off. In many respects a philosopher of the Johnsonian school, Peacock did not share the Doctor's preference for the life of towns. Unfair as he often was to Wordsworth, and incapable of appreciating the Lake Poets at their true value, he was a genuine Wordsworthian in his passionate love of woods, and trees, and cataracts. Among contemporary novelists Mr. Hardy comes nearest him in this line. As an artist in the widest sense, the author of "The Woodlanders" is incomparably superior to the author of "Melincourt." "Melincourt" is indeed hardly a book at all, but a burlesque grotesque, unlike anything in the heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or in the water under the earth. Such names as Miss Danaretta Constantina Pinmoney, the Reverend Mr. Grovelgrub, and Lord Anophel Achtar would be in themselves enough to ruin a story, if there were any story to ruin. But Anthelia's country walk, so justly praised by Dr. Garnett, would be difficult to match for the ease, grace, and power of the few strokes in which it is portrayed. When, after resting on the knotted base of the ash-trunk, she "rose to pursue her walk," she "ascended, by a narrow winding path, the brow

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of a lofty hill which sunk precipitously on the other side to the margin of a lake that seemed to slumber in the same eternal stillness as the rocks that bordered it. The murmur of the torrent was inaudible at that elevation. There was an almost oppressive silence in the air. The motion and life of nature seemed suspended. The gray mist that hung on the mountains, spreading its thin transparent uniform veil over the whole surrounding scene, gave a deeper impression to the mystery of loneliness, the predominant feeling that pressed on the mind of Anthelia, to seem the only thing that lived and moved in all that wide and awful scene of beauty." Such a passage as this redeems even "*Melincourt*" from the oblivion which, considered as a novel, it undoubtedly deserves.

The first book in which Peacock's genius had full play is "*Nightmare Abbey*." In wit and humour it stands at the head of all his works. Better and purer English has seldom, if ever, been written, and the difficulty of quoting from it is that one would like to quote every word. Shelley's friendship with Peacock, useful and honourable to both the friends, has produced some of the most delightful letters and one of the most delicious farces in our

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language. The letters were written to Peacock by Shelley from Italy. The farce is "Nightmare Abbey," in which Shelley, who much enjoyed his own portrait, figures as Scythrop. "When Scythrop grew up, he was sent, as usual, to a public school where a little learning was painfully beaten into him, and from thence to the university, where it was carefully taken out of him; and he was sent home like a well-threshed ear of corn, with nothing in his head." Peacock was an unsparing satirist of public schools and universities, with which he had no personal acquaintance. But he caricatured Shelley as though he loved him, and did full justice to the sound sense which was always in the poet's mind, seldom as it may have appeared in his behaviour. To Coleridge (Mr. Flosky) he was far less kind, and his Byron (Mr. Cypress) must be pronounced a failure. In truth, Peacock had not the thoroughness or the pertinacity to draw a finished portrait of any one. He belonged to what, in the language of modern art, is called the impressionist school, and his caricatures suffer from exaggeration. Caricature is like onion in cookery. There can easily be too much of it, and there can hardly be too little. But Peacock sins against all rules, and succeeds

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in spite of his transgressions or by the very magnitude of his offences. Everything in "Nightmare Abbey," except the style, might be condemned on Horatian or Johnsonian principles, and if people are not amused by it there is no more to be said, at least for them.

There is a sort of a plot (rare enough with Peacock), for Scythrop made love to two ladies at the same time, and thereby involved himself in awkward complications. One of the ladies, Marionetta, in spite of her too suggestive name, is a perfectly natural specimen of the human race, feminine gender, and her Shakespearean quotation, which maddens Scythrop, is one of the happiest in all literature.

"I prithee deliver thyself like a man of this world" was her "arch" reply to Scythrop's "passionate language of romance." But the loves of Scythrop and Marionetta are not the real subject of "Nightmare Abbey," which is a satire on German tales of horror, the metaphysics of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, the novels of Mrs. Radcliffe, and other pet objects of the author's aversion. Mr. Flosky, which, as the victims of compulsory Greek may be persuaded into believing, means a lover of the shade, expresses the opinion that "'tea, late dinners, and the French Revolution have played the

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devil, and brought the devil into play.' 'Tea, late dinners, and the French Revolution?' said the Honourable Mr. Listless, 'I cannot exactly see the connection of ideas.' 'I should be sorry if you could,' replied Mr. Flosky; 'I pity the man who can see the connection of his own ideas. Still more do I pity him the connection of whose ideas any other person can see.' " The satire of Coleridge in this singular book is exquisitely malicious, because it is informed by knowledge, and contains just enough truth to make the misrepresentation tell. Except that imperishable chapter in Carlyle's "Life of Sterling," which begins with the words "Coleridge sat on the brow of Highgate," there is nothing quite so successful in sarcastic delineation of him as some parts of "Nightmare Abbey," and the genius of Coleridge is so far above the reach of disparagement that his warmest admirers can afford to laugh at Mr. Flosky's boast that he never gave a plain answer to a plain question in his life. Besides a capital song ("Why are thy looks so blank, grey friar?"), perhaps suggested by Suckling, an excellent parody of Byron—

"There is a fever of the spirit,  
The brand of Cain's unresting doom—"



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and a convivial song of unsurpassed merit ("Seamen three, what men be ye?"), "Nightmare Abbey" contains the best and shortest ghost story in the English language. It is told by the Reverend Mr. Larynx, and is as follows:—

"I once saw a ghost myself in my study, which is the last place where any one but a ghost would look for me. I had not been into it for three months, and was going to consult Tillotson, when on opening the door I saw a venerable figure in a flannel dressing-gown sitting in my armchair and reading my Jeremy Taylor. It vanished in a moment, and so did I; and what it was or what it wanted I have never been able to ascertain."

Mr. Flosky's comment, "It was an idea with the force of a sensation," is a more scientific definition than the one really given by Coleridge, "A man or woman dressed up to frighten another."

The most characteristic, and to my mind the most fascinating, of all Peacock's tales is "Maid Marian." It has been imputed to Peacock that in this serio-comic romance of Sherwood Forest, of Friar Tuck and Robin Hood, he meant to make fun of "Ivanhoe." Dr. Garnett has shown that this is impossible, because "Maid Marian" was completed

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though not published before "*Ivanhoe*" made its appearance. No two ways of treating the Middle Ages more essentially different than Scott's and Peacock's could well be imagined. Scott wrote "*Ivanhoe*" because he thought the public would be tired of the Land of Cakes if he never crossed the Border. But he had some portion of the antiquarian spirit, and loved mediæval chivalry, perhaps better than he understood it. Peacock himself described "*Maid Marian*," in a letter to Shelley, dated the 29th of November 1818, as "a comic romance of the twelfth century, which I shall make the vehicle of much oblique satire on all the oppressions that are done under the sun." But this hardly gives any idea of the brightest and most fanciful extravaganza ever inspired by forest trees and rippling streams and poetic sentiment and popular legend. The purest gem it contains is that perfect lyric—

"For the slender beech and the sapling oak  
That grow by the shadowy rill,  
You may cut down both at a single stroke,  
You may cut down which you will.  
But this you must know, that as long as they grow,  
Whatever change may be,  
You never can teach either oak or beech  
To be aught but a greenwood tree."

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Friar Tuck, otherwise Brother Michael, is constitutionally incapable of making a connected statement in prose. He is perpetually breaking into verse, and his verse is always of the best quality, strong, light, simple, and melodious. Matilda, or Maid Marian, is the most delicious of all Peacock's heroines, and the devotion of the friar to her, "all in the way of honesty," must be shared by every reader of the story. Her father, Baron Fitz-Water, who pretends to be her tyrannical master and is really her submissive slave, displays Peacock's quaint, fantastic humour in its most genial and jovial shape. When the friar "kissed Matilda's forehead and walked away without a song," we are to infer that he was suffering from the violence of suppressed emotion. But it was not many minutes since he had sung, and not many before that since he had got the better of Matilda's noble parent in a verbal encounter of considerable merit.

"Ho! ho! friar!" said the baron, "singing friar, laughing friar, roaring friar, fighting friar, hacking friar, thwacking friar; cracking, cracking, cracking friar; joke-cracking, bottle-cracking, skull-cracking friar!" "And, ho! ho!" said the friar, "bold baron,

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old baron, sturdy baron, wordy baron, long baron, strong baron, mighty baron, flighty baron, mazed baron, crazed baron, hacked baron, thwacked baron, cracked, cracked, cracked baron; bone-cracked, sponce-cracked, brain-cracked baron."

Fooling, no doubt, but excellent fooling all the same. To read "Maid Marian" is like spending a long day in the country with the company of the imagination, the best company in the world. Peacock's knowledge of human nature was limited. He saw weaknesses and oddities rather than character as a whole. This it is which gives an air of crudity to his books, and has even more than their pedantry prevented them from being appreciated by the general. Peacock is in one respect like Carlyle, and Browning, and Meredith. A taste for him is a taste which he himself must give. We must make allowance for his foibles, and grow accustomed to his ways. But when we have fulfilled these conditions, few authors wear better, or yield more to those who read them again and again. There is wit enough in a single dialogue, as there is poetry enough in a single song, of "Maid Marian" to make a literary reputation. "The Misfortunes of Elphin," for

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which I cannot share Professor Saintsbury's enthusiasm (so much the worse for me), contains, besides the lovely Song of the Four Winds, the justly celebrated war-song of Dinas Vawr, every line in which is golden, while the first four verses are inimitable and better than anything in Hookham Frere, as a specimen of the mock heroic—

“The mountain sheep are sweeter,  
But the valley sheep are fatter;  
We therefore deemed it meeter  
To carry off the latter.”

But perhaps some acquaintance with Lady Charlotte Guest's “Mabinogion,” and some familiarity with the “Dionysiaca” of Nonnus, are necessary for the due appreciation of Elphin and Taliessin. Peacock sometimes forgets the words of Shakespeare which he himself puts with such exquisite appropriateness into the mouth of Marionetta. He does not always deliver himself like a man of this world. His want of invention, not of imagination, and his love of eccentricity, led him into strange and devious paths.

If we put personal predilections aside, “Crotchet Castle” is probably the book to which the largest number of Peacock's admirers would give the highest place. There are a

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gaiety, a vivacity, and a force in it which carry the reader with ease and smoothness from the first page to the last. The Rev. Dr. Folliott is the best of Peacock's clergymen, by which I do not mean that he was a good clergyman, nor anything of the kind. To assist at the squire's dinner, to criticise his cellar and his wine, accompanying his criticisms with abundance of Greek and Latin, was in Peacock's eyes the chief function of a beneficed divine, the "educated gentleman" of the parish. Dr. Folliott and Dr. Opimian, to say nothing of Dr. Gaster and Mr. Portpipe, are quite enough to justify the Oxford Movement. Gaster and Portpipe, however, are simply bibulous gluttons, hardly men at all. Folliott of "Crotchet Castle" and Opimian of "Gryll Grange" are capital as portraits. It is as parsons that their inadequacy comes in. Incapacity it can hardly be called. Their capacity for eating and drinking may be favourably described as Homeric, and unfavourably as swinish. "I do not fancy hock," said Dr. Folliott, "till I have laid a substratum of Madeira." "Palestine soup" are the first words which issue from the mouth of Dr. Opimian, and he is left giving instructions how to open simultaneously many bottles of

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champagne. But Opimian and Folliott are not mere epicures. They are scholars, though pedants, and proofs that a pedant may have a sense of humour. There is nothing, for instance, finer of its sort in all Peacock than the conversation between Dr. Folliott and Mr. Crotchet about the Sleeping Venus. Mr. Crotchet, irritated by a magisterial order that no plaster of Paris Venus should appear in the streets of London without petticoats, determined to fill his house with Venuses of all sizes and kinds. Dr. Folliott, perceiving this addition to his friend's furniture, suddenly remembered his cloth, not, for once, the table-cloth, and attempted experimentally a mild protest. "These little alabaster figures on the mantelpiece, Mr. Crotchet, and those large figures in the niches—may I take the liberty to ask you what they are intended to represent?" Mr. Crotchet's answer was not encouraging. "Venus, sir; nothing more, sir; just Venus." "May I ask you, sir," proceeded the reverend doctor, "why they are there?" Mr. Crotchet was not embarrassed. "To be looked at, sir; just to be looked at: the reason for most things in a gentleman's house being in it at all; from the paper on the walls and the drapery of the curtains even to the

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books in the library, of which the most essential part is the appearance of the back." The dialogue is unhappily too long to quote in full. Dr. Folliott's austerity was partly assumed, and there can be no doubt that he enjoyed the discussion of the subject, if only because it gave him an opportunity of showing that he read the classics in the original, whereas his friend only read them in cribs. His appeal to Mr. Crotchet as a father, though futile, is touching. "Now, sir, that little figure in the centre of the mantelpiece—as a grave *pater-familias*, Mr. Crotchet, with a fair nubile daughter, whose eyes are like the fishpools of Heshbon—I would ask you if you hold that figure to be altogether delicate." "The Sleeping Venus, sir? Nothing can be more delicate than the entire contour of the figure, the flow of the hair on the shoulders and neck, the form of the feet and fingers. It is altogether a most delicate morsel." Mr. Crotchet was getting decidedly the best of it, and his spiritual adviser took refuge in a gastronomic metaphor. "Why, sir, in that sense, perhaps, it is as delicate as whitebait in July. But the attitude, sir, the attitude." Mr. Crotchet was unyielding. "Nothing can be more natural, sir." "That is the very thing, sir. It is too



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natural, too natural, sir." And so forth, until Mr. Crotchet, becoming, as Dr. Folliott remarks, rather weary, exclaims that to "show his contempt for cant in all its shapes he has adorned his house with the Greek Venus in all her shapes, and is ready to fight her battle against all the societies that ever were instituted for the suppression of truth and beauty."

"Gryll Grange" is of all Peacock's novels the most pedantic. It is strewn with quotations from the classics, especially from Athenæus, and the friendship of Dr. Opimian for Mr. Falconer arises from the remarkable fact that they are both acquainted with Homer. The story is not more interesting than the words of Italian opera, and might almost have been written for the songs, as the libretto of the "Magic Flute" must have been written for the music. Mr. Algernon Falconer and his fantastic establishment of seven modest maidens to wait upon one innocent bachelor lack the verisimilitude which is literature's substitute for truth. But the Reverend Dr. Opimian, whose wife calls him "doctor" even when they are alone (and indeed his Christian name of Theophilus is some excuse for her), is a personage such as only Peacock could create, a pundit and an epicure, a dignified clergyman

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who might have acted as chaplain to the Rabelaisian brotherhood and sisterhood of Thelema. Dr. Opimian is a variant of Dr. Folliott in "Crotchet Castle," and it is impossible to read of either without thinking of Dr. Middleton in "The Egoist." But indeed Dr. Opimian is quite as like Peacock himself as Jonathan Oldbuck was like Walter Scott. "I think, doctor," said Mrs. Opimian, "you would not maintain any opinion if you had not an authority two thousand years old for it." "Well, my dear," was the reply, "I think most opinions worth mentioning have an authority of about that age." In a charming and most appropriate note to this passage Dr. Garnett mentions that one of Peacock's last remarks to his old friend Trelawny was, "Ah! Trelawny, don't talk to me about anything that has happened for the last two thousand years." He was indeed a pure and perfect Pagan born out of due time in an uncongenial world of Tractarian Movements and railway trains. His oddities were numerous and ineradicable, following without displacing one another. He was not much in the habit of quoting Scripture. But there is a text in Isaiah on which he could always have preached. "Let us eat and drink, for to-

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morrow we shall die," was the sum and substance of his philosophy. We find a tinge of unwonted melancholy in his last book, as of one bidding farewell to a long and happy life, which suits well with his creed, and he would have delighted in the melodiously fatalistic stanzas of Omar Khayyam. It is said that in his last days, which were calm and peaceful, his memory dwelt with continual fondness upon a girl he used to meet in the ruins of Newark Abbey, who died when he was seventeen. His lovely poem, "Newark Abbey," much admired, as Dr. Garnett tells us, by Tennyson, is less appropriate to this strange reversion, of which his granddaughter was the witness, than those haunting lines which begin with "What is he buzzing in my ears?" and ends with "How sad and bad and mad it was—But then, how it was sweet!" The poetry of "Gryll Grange" is not as a rule among Peacock's best. But the song called "Love and Age" is unrivalled in all the varied efforts of his muse for its simple indefinable pathos.

"There are some books," said the country squire, "which it is a positive pleasure to read." He was probably thinking of Surtees. He was certainly not thinking of Peacock,

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who, of all English authors, except perhaps Burton and Southey, is the most bookish. One must like Peacock because one likes reading. One cannot like reading because one likes Peacock. Peacock had an irritable and foolish dislike of Scott, who appeals to all healthy natures, whether they be literary or otherwise. There was nothing in Scott, he said, which could be quoted. It was a most characteristic objection, and it is so far true that quotations from Scott can hardly be confined to single phrases or sentences. With Shakespeare Peacock was familiar, for Shakespeare, as we all know, is even too full of quotations. But, indeed, Peacock's own pet authors, of whom he never tired, from whom he seldom cared to stray, were the classical writers of Greece and Rome. They supplied him with an inexhaustible fund of epigram, anecdote, and illustration. Except his poetry and his humour, they were the only intellectual furniture he had. "Gryll Grange" might well be edited for the use of schools as an entertaining substitute for Bekker's "Charicles," or the same learned writer's "Gallus." He was perplexed by the tricks which according to Athenæus the Greeks played with their wine, for he was not in the

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habit of mixing it even with fresh water, and they are said to have mixed it with water from the sea. Dr. Folliott is even permitted, but only because of his order, to express disapproval of the Athenian Aspasia, and the Corinthian Lais. The Greeks in Peacock's eyes were perfect. The darker features of their life he ignored, or left to St. Paul. To him they were simple people who made the best of art and nature, of themselves and of the world they inhabited. Rabelais he worshipped for having restored something like the spirit of ancient freedom, freedom to understand and to enjoy. The sense of beauty penetrates all his writings, and his most finished writing, as in "Nightmare Abbey" or "Crochet Castle," comes very near perfection. His learning is so much enlightened with sense and enlivened by humour that it never becomes offensive and seldom becomes dull. When the odd folk he sometimes brings together grow quarrelsome over their cups, as in "Headlong Hall," their differences are composed by a glee or a catch. Peacock cared not for the rules and restrictions which were imposed on themselves by his beloved Greeks. Except that he is never indecent, and that he has not the great Frenchman's tremendous

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force, he resembles Rabelais rather than Lucian. Among Latin authors his favourite was Tacitus, whose compactness of style, with its undying charm for the literary palate, exercised a noticeable influence upon his own. His acquaintance with modern literature was not wide, nor was his judgment of it sound. He had none of his friend Charles Lamb's genial catholicity in respect of all books that deserved the name. The classics were his Koran. What they did not contain was not worth knowing. Short of offering sacrifices to Jupiter and Venus, from which the fear of ridicule, or perhaps the opinion of Cicero, restrained him, he stuck at nothing which was ancient, mature, and respectable. Even in classical matters his taste was capricious. But in spite of his irregularities, or perhaps because of them, his books have an unfading attraction for those who can relish them at all.

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## *The Religion of the Greeks*

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THE letter from Mr. Gladstone to Lord Lyttelton on classical education, which Mr. Morley has printed in the appendix of his second volume, expresses an opinion that "modern European civilisation, from the Middle Age downwards, is the compound of two great factors, the Christian religion for the spirit of man, and the Greek, and in a secondary degree the Roman, discipline for his mind and intellect." Yet no one knew better than Mr. Gladstone that Greek religion had exercised a profound influence upon human thought. He indulged himself in copious speculations on the subject, and went astray because he had not the clue. Miss Jane Harrison's "Prolegomena to the Study of Greek Religion," published by the University Press at Cambridge, is the modest title of an original work founded on elaborate research, and full of interest not only for antiquaries and comparative mythologists, but for every student of the language and literature without which the world would be quite different from what we know it. With the

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materials and methods of Miss Harrison's labours I am quite incompetent to deal, though I think I can appreciate the soundness of her learning and the acuteness with which she argues her points. The fellowship at Newnham, that has enabled her, she tells us, to produce this book, is a singularly fruitful example of intellectual endowment. Her "Prolegomena" are more than an Introduction, which is all that that imposing word can be made to signify. They contain the fullest account that has yet been given of Greek ritual before Homer. Miss Harrison begins with snake-worship, and ends with the Orphic mysteries. The rites and ceremonies, the fancies and superstitions with which she deals, were almost obsolete in Homer's time, or in the time of the Homeric poems. The mythology of Homer is "sceptical and moribund already in its very perfection." To those who associate the Father of Poetry with the undying freshness of wind from the sea, or light from the stars, with a simplicity older than self-conscious art, and with a closeness to nature such as no one except our own Chaucer has approached, Miss Harrison's epithets may perhaps seem strange. But she is applying them, of course, to Homer as a



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mythologist, not to Homer as a poet. She is contrasting his dim underworld of ghosts and shades with the eternal punishment of the Orphic eschatology, and his physical purification of unclean dwellings with the moral atonement which it originally symbolised. She is thinking of the time when Zeus Meilichios, the gracious father of gods and men, was worshipped as a snake. So it appears from two reliefs found at the Peiræus, and now in the museum at Berlin. This was the older Chthonian worship upon which the Olympian theology was imposed.

These investigations have their scientific purpose and object in the development of philosophical ideas. But they also serve to illustrate Greek literature, and therefore all literature from their day till our own. Under Miss Harrison's treatment the oldest writers are not always the most ancient. There may be more antiquarianism in Æschylus than in Homer, in Plutarch than in Aristophanes, in Lucian even than in Thucydides. Theocritus certainly did not worship Zeus as a snake, even if he worshipped him at all. He was a poet of the Court, as well as of the country, and yet his second Idyll, perhaps the most passionate utterance ever put by a poet into

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the mouth of a woman, is the great authority for ancient magic. The turning of a wheel, the melting of a wax image, an invocation of the moon, are the methods, familiar enough, by which Simætha avenges herself on Delphis, her recreant lover, "the slave of Aphrodite and of love."

*" Turn, magic wheel, turn homeward him I love.  
Even as I melt, not uninspired, the wax,  
May Mindian Delphis melt this morn with love.  
And, swiftly as this brazen wheel whirls round,  
May Aphrodite whirl him to my door."*

These lines are from Calverley's translation, which Miss Harrison does not use. It is, I think, one of the most brilliant ever made in English from a classical author, though perhaps this is not one of its most brilliant passages.

*" Turn, magic wheel, turn homeward him I love.  
Next burn the husks. Hell's adamant floor  
And aught else that stands firm can Artemis move.  
Thestylis, the hounds bay up and down the town :  
The goddess stands i' the crossways : sound the gongs."*

'Α θεὸς ἐν τριόδοις is Diana "of the Crossways, whom our great novelist has made a household word. But why are the gongs to be sounded? Artemis has been invoked, and the brass is "apotropaic," meant to avert some evil thing. It is not difficult to imagine that when

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“fate and metaphysical aid” have been summoned their approach may still be dreaded. Don Giovanni invited the statue of the Commendatore to supper, not believing that the invitation would be accepted. When it was accepted, and the Commendatore came, Don Giovanni was alarmed, as well as surprised. Nobody comes in this Idyll. The gong counteracted the invocation, and the poem ends with an address to the moon, hardly surpassed even by Theocritus, the greatest of all pastoral poets. From Theocritus Miss Harrison passes to Aristophanes, because his play of the “Thesmophoriazusæ” is called after the Thesmophoria, a festival whereat curses were uttered which Miss Harrison compares with the Commination service for Ash Wednesday. “From the ‘Thesmophoriazusæ’ of Aristophanes we learn almost nothing of the ritual of the Thesmophoria save the fact that the feast was celebrated on the Pnyx.” But, at the same time, if Aristophanes had not written the “Thesmophoriazusæ,” we should not greatly care to know what the Thesmophoria was, so that literature may be the handmaid of those higher studies which are severely superseding it in learned societies like Cambridge.

In the “Thesmophoriazusæ” the women

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revenge themselves upon Euripides for maltreating them in his plays, which were too moral and not religious enough for the great comedian. In that astonishingly clever book, "Euripides the Rationalist," so clever that scarcely any one can help believing it while he reads it, Dr. Verrall says that almost the only charge of immorality Aristophanes could bring against Euripides was founded on the famous line in the "Hippolytus"—"My tongue has sworn, but my mind is not bound by the oath." But if every dramatic author were made responsible for all the sentiments uttered by all his characters, Æschylus and Sophocles would have been liable to the same censure as Euripides. Aristophanes dealt with the general tendency of an author whom he regarded, if not as a "rationalist," at least as a radical reformer and a bad playwright into the bargain. Aristotle does not call him a bad playwright. On the contrary, he says in his "Poetics" that Euripides was "the most tragic of poets," whatever that may mean. Professor Butcher interprets it to signify that Euripides had "the preference of the poet for the true tragic ending," as in the "Medea," "Hippolytus," and "Hecuba." But the play of Euripides most closely connected with

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religion is none of these, nor is it any of those examined by Dr. Verrall to support his theory that Euripides had a great moral purpose in exposing a false and debasing theology. It is the "*Bacchæ*" which contains one of the most splendid descriptions of religious enthusiasm, or superstitious madness, to be found in the poetry of the world. The question whether Euripides meant to write an encomium or a satire has been the subject of much controversy in modern times. Grote believed that he wished in this wonderful drama, written at the close of his life, "to repel the imputations, so often made against him, of commerce with the philosophers and participation in sundry heretical opinions." It is, however, extremely difficult to accept the suggestion that then, or at any other time, the author of the "*Alcestis*," familiar to English readers in "*Balaustion's Adventure*," "favourably contrasted the uninquiring faith of the vulgar with the dissenting and inquisitive tendencies of superior minds," though doubtless there are words in the play which, construed literally, may be taken to mean something of the sort. But even if one cannot go all the way with Dr. Verrall, who perhaps sees in Euripides more than Euripides saw himself, one must at least

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admit that there are insuperable difficulties in the theory of Schlegel that he simply failed where Æschylus and Sophocles had succeeded. And it is to be observed that Professor Bury, in his excellent "History of Greece," written on much better principles than those which he laid down in his inaugural lecture at Cambridge, takes Dr. Verrall's view as established. "Euripides," says Mr. Bury, "used the tragic stage to disseminate rationalism; he undermined the popular religion from the very steps of the altar. By the necessity of the case he accomplished his work indirectly, but with consummate dexterity. Æschylus and Sophocles had reverently modified religious legend, adapting it to their own ideals, interpreting it so as to satisfy their own moral standard. Euripides takes the myths just as he finds them, and contrives his dramas so as to bring the absurdities into relief." He must, then, have been sarcastic if he meant to adopt himself the language which he assigns in the "Bacchæ" to Teiresias. "We make no speculations about divine beings. No theory will ever destroy the traditions, or the feelings, which in our own lifetime we have acquired, not even if the theory has been discovered by the highest intellects."

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Although the religion of which Miss Harrison traces the origin was merely traditional in classical, even in Homeric, times, it explains and illustrates much that would otherwise be obscure in Greek literature, while for Greek art it is indispensable. Miss Harrison's book, a really great book, as well as a truly learned one, is made not only more attractive, but very much clearer, by beautiful illustrations from ancient vases and reliefs. But they are much more than illustrations. They are evidence, sometimes the only evidence, of the way in which myths grew, and legends were understood, and gods were worshipped in this form or that. The frenzy of the "Bacchæ," who are rather profanely compared by Miss Harrison with the Hallelujah lasses of the Salvation Army, is essentially feminine. Perhaps few people realised before the appearance of these "Prolegomena" how feminine the origin of Greek religion was. If many of Miss Harrison's pages appeal chiefly to adepts in archæology, her delightful chapter on "The Making of a Goddess" should be read by every one who cares for the history of art. The religion of Greece is not peculiar in being anthropomorphic. The familiar lines of Xenophanes are an anticipation of the terrible comment made by

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Voltaire upon the words "In the image of God made He man." "*Il l'a bien rendu*," said the Frenchman. Xenophanes wrote that, as mortal man made gods in his own likeness, so oxen, lions, and horses, if they had hands, would make gods equine, gods leonine, gods bovine. There was a time when the Greeks worshipped a snake for Zeus, a mare for Demeter, and a fish for Artemis. When the Greek mind passed out of this stage, it did not proceed at once to the adoration of human and masculine divinities. St. Augustine, of all people, tells a curious story to explain how the Athenian women lost the franchise. The competing claims of Athene and Poseidon were referred to universal suffrage. For in those days, it seems, the people elected their own gods. The vote was according to sex, and Athene headed the poll by a bare majority. After this women were never allowed to vote again, nor to call their children by their own names, a senseless practice which breeds confusion. The supremacy thus lost originated with Earth, the mother of all things, called by Homer *φύσιζοος*, life-giving, as in the lovely passage from the third book of the "Iliad," where Helen on the walls of Troy condoles with her brethren,



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Castor and Polydeuces, not knowing that they were dead.

“So said she : they long since in earth’s soft arms  
were reposing.

There in their own dear land, their fatherland  
Lacedæmon.”

“Earth’s soft arms” is Dr. Hawtrey’s free translation of *φυσίζοος*. But with the instinct of a scholar he keeps nearer to Homer’s true meaning than Ruskin, who, in his strange fanciful way, imagines that Homer could not think of death without also thinking of life. Homer could use a fixed epithet without thinking at all. But the universal mother is represented on vases as *ποτνία θηρῶν*, lady of the wild things, holding out her hands over the animals, her subjects. The Lady of the Wild Things was the goddess of a hunting age. When man became agricultural there was a goddess of fertility, a fruit-bearing goddess, Demeter, nowhere more gloriously honoured than in the seventh Idyll, the Harvest Home, of Theocritus, where she stands and smiles before her shrine, holding sheaves and poppies in both her hands,

“δράγματα καὶ μάκωνας ἐν ἀμφιτέρῃσιν ἔχουσα.”

I scarcely know another instance of words so

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absolutely simple invested with such magical, inexplicable charm. The "Highland Reaper" might be quoted. But Wordsworth's art is greater, as his ideas are higher. It is to association, not to a mere picture, that he appeals. Demeter, as every one knows, was the mother of Persephone, the goddess of the regions below, "who gathers all things mortal with cold, immortal hands." Demeter ascended to Olympus, and became part of the Olympian theology. The early deification of women produced maiden trinities, of which there are curious specimens on votive reliefs. Miss Harrison discerns in them three persons and one goddess. But this conception is only attributed to very early work, where it may be due to imperfect art, as other mysterious semblances are due to imperfect observation. Certainly nothing Trinitarian, except the number Three, is left in the Judgment of Paris. Paris himself is absent from the older representations of this scene, which typifies and symbolises the difficulty of choice without reference to the particular object chosen. Aphrodite is not always rising from the sea. She is also of the earth, and she is represented on a vase as "sailing through heaven on her great swan." But perhaps the most beautiful composition in

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which she figures is the Ludovisi throne, now in the National Museum at Rome. A hasty observer would call it the Venus Anadyomene, and would speak of it as the Goddess of Love rising from the sea. There is no sea, though the women who hold her up stand on sloping banks of shingle. This sculptured slab belongs to the period just before Pheidias, which some critics regard as the most exquisite of all, and certainly there are few things so beautiful, even in Italy. Whether she be ascending from the ocean, or from a sacred river, or from a ritual bath, she is a joy for ever. Aphrodite is the most human form of feminine divinity, as Byron recognised in his irreverent couplet, and Lucretius in his "rich Proœmion." When the worship of the Earth Mother and of the Earth Maids passed over to Zeus and the new hierarchy of Olympus, "the great Monotheistic figure of Venus Genetrix" reminded later ages that the origin of all things, whether Ge or Hera, Athene or Aphrodite, belonged to the feminine gender. And now that every trace of her worship, at least of her religious worship, has disappeared from the world, at least from the western world, the old matriarchal theory survives the centuries which have rolled over the dethroned altars

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of Paganism, in the solemn words "Man that is born of a woman."

Miss Harrison's chapters on Orphism are the most solid and consecutive part of her religious history. They bring back the mind by degrees to that mysterious play of Euripides already cited, from which comes so much of what we know about the religion of Greece. It is a remarkable accident that has left us in this matter to the dramatist who had least sympathy with the popular faith of his countrymen. For Æschylus, too, wrote a drama, of which religious frenzy was the subject, and two tantalising fragments of it have been preserved by Strabo. Æschylus himself could hardly have produced a finer composition than the "Bacchæ." But, if he had, there would have been no dark problems about his meaning. He could not have been suspected of turning the whole subject into ridicule. His lines on the mysterious music with which homage was paid to Dionysus have been preserved, and thus brilliantly translated by Miss Harrison :

"The shawm blares out, but beneath is the moan  
Of the bull-voiced mimes, unseen, unknown,  
And in deep diapason the shuddering sound  
Of drums like thunder beneath the ground."

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If Miss Harrison had been able to give the Greek as well as the English of this fragment, numbered 55 in the Æschylean collection, it would be seen that bull-voiced mimes is a literal, perhaps a too literal, translation, and that "mimes," or actors, must have bellowed in honour of their Bromios, their boisterous god, although Miss Harrison derives the name from *βρόμος*, oats, thus tracing him to the Earth-Goddess on the one hand, and accounting for the intoxication of his votaries, because wine can be made, so the Emperor Julian said, of barley, if not of oats. Herodotus speaks of Bacchic and Orphic rites as identical, further describing them as Egyptian and Pythagorean. The worship of Orpheus is as old as the hills, or at least older than the wall-paintings of Pompeii, where he figures as a magical musician, "with power over all wild untamed things in nature." Orpheus, says Miss Harrison, though killed by the Mænads, as Milton in "Lycidas" reminds us, was also buried by "the Mænads repentant, clothed, and in their right minds," or, in other words, by the Muses. This typifies the fact that Orphism is a spiritual ecstasy, far removed from the orgies associated with the worship of Bacchus. Concerning the death of Orpheus there is a singular

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passage in the most artistically beautiful of all Plato's dialogues, which may be called in some sense a part of English literature, because it contains a prophecy of Shakespeare and has been translated by Shelley. The subject of the "Symposium," or, in less barbarous language, the "Banquet," is love, and at the end of his contribution to it Phædrus describes the fate of Orpheus when he visited the realms of Dis in search of Eurydice. The gods sent him away empty-handed, and only showed him a phantom of his wife, because they thought him an effeminate lute-player, who durst not die for his love, like Alcestis, but sought out inventions for making his way alive into Hades. For this cause therefore they inflicted as a punishment on him that his death should be at the hands of women. Phædrus, in his discourse, was using an argument, and making a point. It was his business, his part of the evening's entertainment, to prove that extreme devotion to a beloved object was the highest form of human virtue. Achilles showed this in the case of Patroclus, whose death he avenged at the cost of his own life, and Alcestis showed it by dying for her unworthy husband Admetus. Alcestis was rewarded by restoration to the world she

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had left, and Achilles by removal to the islands of the blest. In Euripides, according to Dr. Verrall, Alcestis never really dies, and her resurrection is a sham. Æschylus, in a lost drama, is recorded to have made the Bassarids, or Mænads, who killed Orpheus, the messengers of Dionysus himself, whose wrath was kindled by the blasphemy of Orpheus in prostrating himself before the sun. Well might Socrates maintain in the "Republic" that popular religion was not to be reconciled with the first principles of morality.

The head of Orpheus was buried in Lesbos, and the nightingales sang over it their sweetest songs. It gave oracles in the name of Apollo, and in the good old style, which could not be wrong, because it could be made to square with any event. Orphism became a recognised creed, and was widely spread in Greece long before classical times. As Orphism prevailed in Crete, the discoveries now being made in that island, perhaps the most important since the study of archæology began, may throw a good deal of light upon Orphic rites and ceremonies. Orphism, says Professor Bury, rested on three institutions. One was the worship of Dionysus, another was the mysteries of the world below, the third was the order

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of itinerant prophets. Pythagoras was an Orphic, and founded an ascetic brotherhood in Italy, with which the Horatian "bean of Pythagoras" has made us familiar. The Pythagoreans were oligarchical in politics, and about the middle of the fifth century before Christ they were destroyed by the democratic party. Mr. Bury believes that if Orphism, instead of colouring the poetry of Pindar and Æschylus, had taken hold of public opinion, the priests would have become the rulers of the people and would have set up a sacerdotal system in place of civil government. It affected, however, a passage in a great poem, compared with which all institutions then existing in the world were transient and ephemeral. The eleventh book of the "Odyssey" tells how Ulysses and his companions, by the instructions of Circe, came to the land of the Cimmerians enveloped in cloud and darkness, that they might bring up the souls of those whom in this life they had known, and of the prophet Teiresias, who foretells their destruction if they eat the oxen of the Sun. It was then that by the shore of that ocean which Homer, or the author of the "Odyssey," supposed to encircle the globe, Ulysses dug a trench with his



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sword, and poured out three libations for the dead. The first was honey and milk, the second was wine, and over all he sprinkled barley. By these means he brought up the dead, as the witch of Endor brought up Samuel for Saul. This wonderful episode is supposed to have been revised with interpolations by Onomacritus, working under Pisistratus, who procured the Homeric poems to be edited and written down. There is no torture, no actual punishment, in the Hades of Homer. It is a grey, dim region, without light or warmth or colour, but not a world of pain, except in special cases, such as Tityus with his vulture, Tantalus with, or rather without, his water, and Sisyphus with his stone. Of Heracles a mere image was to be seen. He himself was feasting with the immortal gods, and had Hebe of the fair ankles for his companion. What Plato or the Platonic Socrates thought of Orphic eschatology we know from the second book of the "Republic." Musæus and his son Eumolpus were, says Socrates, stranger in their notions of what was truly good, and should therefore be given as a reward to the righteous, than even Homer and Hesiod. For when they bring the just to the life

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beyond the grave, they recline them on couches, and prepare for them a banquet of holy things, and make them spend their whole time crowned and drunk, deeming perpetual inebriation to be the fairest reward of virtue. And they spin yet longer tales than these on divine authority, such as that good and just men leave behind them a long line of descendants, while the wicked have a bad reputation in life, and after death are put into baths of mud, or made to draw water in a sieve. Against materialism in religion Socrates never ceased to protest, and so far he was in agreement with Euripides the Rationalist. He brought religion to the test of morality, and he found that it signally failed. His own inward monitor, his negative conscience, a restraining not a propelling force, was the only guide he had which could in any sense be called *præternatural*. No one can read the "Apology," the speech of Socrates to the jury who condemned him, and doubt that he sincerely believed in the reality of this inner light. For even if Plato invented all the rest of the speech, he certainly did not invent that. When the Olympian hierarchy had followed the Orphic mysteries into the dimness of legendary tradi-

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tion, and had no more influence upon conduct than a fairy tale, there remained the fact that Orpheus was a real man who had sought eternal life through purity. Yet, although in the greatest and best known ages of Greece religion was little more than the embellishment of literature and the handmaid of art, we have to reconstruct it before we can fully understand either one or the other. And if it be said that to explain religion by art, and art by religion, is to argue in a circle, we may reply that when a sufficient number of particular instances have established a general rule, the rule itself can in its turn be used for the solution of what is still obscure. The wholesome scepticism which research engenders should be a preservative against riding even hobbies too hard.

"Excepting Aristotle," says Mr. Murray in his essay on Euripides, "excepting Aristotle, who clung characteristically to the concrete city and the dutiful taxpaying citizen, all the great leaders of Greek thought turned away from the world and sought refuge in the soul." Euripides, the critics tell us, wrote the "*Bacchæ*" after he had left Athens in disgrace, and when he was living under the

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protection of Archelaus, King of Macedonia. The story of the play is simple and horrible. Dionysus comes to Thebes, and the people will not worship him. He makes them worship him "with a vengeance," with the wildness of unrestrained religious emotion. Pentheus, the King of Thebes, insults the god, intrudes upon his mystic rites, and is torn to pieces by the god-intoxicated Bacchanals, including his own mother, Agave. It is not to be supposed that Euripides intended by his magnificent setting of this repulsive fable to inculcate fanaticism, or hold it up for admiration. His sojourn with King Archelaus would not have been a good opportunity for expressing sympathy with the murderers of King Pentheus. Plato in the "Republic" quotes a line of Euripides, not from any extant play, affirming that despots become wise by associating with wise men, and sarcastically remarks that the poet was speaking of kings he had known. Yet if, as is said, the Athenian democracy punished Euripides for impiety, it was an honour which he shared with the greatest of Athenians, the father of scientific knowledge.

I think it is Bayle who says of Cicero that his religion was in his heart and not in his mind, that it was an instinct of his nature, with

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which his philosophical theories had nothing to do. Cicero's philosophy, though it has had millions of readers who knew little or nothing of its source, did not profess to be original. He derived it from Plato, or from Socrates, or from both. Greek metaphysics, Greek ethics, Greek thought in general, culminated after the political power of Greece, or at least of Athens, had already begun to decline. Upon the contemporaries of Socrates, still more upon the younger generation of his illustrious disciple, the orthodox religion, the religion of the States had ceased to exercise any practical influence. Men were philosophers, or they were pure materialists, unless indeed they were one and the other at the same time. The main interest of such books as Miss Harrison's, except for highly cultivated specialists like herself, is the help they give us in the study of literature and art. Even in the Platonic age this was not far from the truth. That part of the case against Socrates which charged him with undermining the foundations of faith would have been perfectly accurate if they had not been already undermined. People do not like to be reminded of the difference between their theory and their practice, or to be told that they have ceased sincerely to hold the doctrines they

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have inherited by tradition. If few verdicts are more difficult to justify, few are less difficult to understand, than the condemnation of Socrates. Of later ages, when Christians burnt each other because they believed too much or too little, it has been well asked and answered "Who lights the fagot? 'Tis not the firm faith, but the lurking doubt." The jury who found Socrates to be an atheist were probably sceptics to a man. So were those, if the story be true, who procured the banishment of Euripides. Different as the two men of genius were in their views of life, and in their comparative estimate of human affairs, they agreed in their use of the popular religion. They both employed it to illustrate and adorn, to supply examples which would be understood, to give local colour. Plato, though he constantly attacked Homer as the fount and origin of an immoral habit, a habit of mingling truth with falsehood under the glamour of eloquence and verse, could not get away from him, and quoted him as men of all opinions now quote the Bible, because every one will recognise the quotation. Euripides taught his moral by means of a mythology which all his hearers, and all his readers, think what they might of it, knew by heart, just as St. Paul

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laid hold of the admission that there were Athenians who worshipped an unknown God.

In that marvellous dialogue, the "Gorgias," of which not the least wonderful feature is that it was written four hundred years before Christ, the examples of Tantalus, and Tityus, and Sisyphus are put forward to show that kings and princes and dictators are punished beyond the grave on a scale proportionate to their offences. Just as St. James told the rich men to weep and howl for the miseries that were come upon them, so Plato or his master picked out the great and mighty upon earth for the future punishment which Homer borrowed from the Orphic creed. Private persons, such as Thersites, have not, Socrates remarks, been depicted as undergoing these torments, because luckily for them they had not the opportunity of committing great crimes. They were not, therefore, as Jowett says, counted worthy of eternal damnation. In the "Gorgias," Socrates seems to accept for the sake of the argument the authority of Homer, which in the "Republic" he repudiates altogether. If poets were regarded as moral teachers, or faithful historians, they were a danger to the State. But they were valuable as witnesses to that common opinion of mankind which they fol-

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lowed even when they seemed to lead it. Such appears to have been the general attitude of the Platonic Socrates towards the mythology of the poets. There is, however, a curious and interesting exception. The passage in the "Odyssey" which describes Minos bearing his golden sceptre, and giving laws to the dead, is quoted by Socrates in the "Gorgias" with all seriousness as the embodiment of a solemn reality. He is convinced, he says, of its truth, and he so orders his life that he may present his soul in all possible purity to Minos, the judge. These, he adds, are regarded as old wives' fables by enlightened young men like Callicles and Polus and Gorgias, whom he is addressing. Yet, though they are the wisest of living Greeks they have nothing better to propound than the stories they reject. He is not seriously arguing, he would be the last man to argue, that Orphism, or any other theology, must be adopted by every man who cannot provide a substitute. He did not believe in the divine origin of the "Odyssey." He asks how this doctrine of future retribution came into existence, and he answers that it testifies to an indwelling sentiment of the human mind. The more purely human it is, the stronger his case becomes. The outward



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signs and symbols of earthly greatness, the pomp of power, and the apparent impunity with which it is abused; the cynical indifference of tyrants like Archelaus to everything except their own interests and their own pleasure; the oppression of the good, the triumph of the wicked, the open and successful appeal to force as stronger than justice; all these things excuse, or at least explain, the blunt assertion of Callicles that might is right, or, as the modern blasphemer put it, that God is always on the side of the strongest battalions. "Yes," says Socrates, "that may be all very well. You account, or you think you have accounted, for the superficial aspect of things. But how do you explain these stories of Minos, and Æacus and Rhadamanthus; of the stone, and the sieve, and the wheel? Homer did not invent them. They are forms of the universal belief, which no cynical paradoxes will ever expel from the human mind, that the difference between right and wrong is eternal, that it is more blessed to be the victim than the author of injustice." That the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God might be called the text or motto of the "Gorgias." The problems with which it deals are for the most part simple and elementary. When Callicles looked

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at the little tyrants of Greek or Sicilian cities, and saw that they came in no misfortune like other folk, neither were plagued like other men, he drew the inference which was not new then, and is not old now, that it was wisest for each man to imitate them in his own sphere. Socrates was not content with vanquishing Callicles in argument. He took him into the kingdom of Minos, that he might understand the end of these men. That was the use he made of Greek religion. Himself guided, or at least restrained, by his "dæmonic" conscience, he appealed to popular mythology, not as evidence of facts, but as an indication of certain tendencies in the human mind. If, as Miss Harrison says, "the last word in ancient Greek religion was said by the Orphics," it was capable of being moulded by the hands of philosophical genius into the austere and sublime morality which made Theætetus exclaim: "If you could persuade all men, Socrates, of what you say, as you persuade me, there would be more peace and less evil in the world."

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## *Bishops and Historians*<sup>1</sup>

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**N**O bishop's letters are less episcopal, or more amusing, than the letters of Dr. Stubbs. Stubbs was thoroughly clerical, and severely orthodox. But a bishop, except in name, he was not. From the bottom of his soul, and in almost equal proportions, he hated ceremony, fuss, and waste of time. An old-fashioned High Churchman by conviction, detesting Erastianism with all the fervour of Becket, he had no respect for the outward symbols of Ritualism, and preferred an umbrella to a pastoral staff. Simply and deeply religious, he could not resist making fun of what he despised, and he despised everything that was not real. Learned as Germans are learned, to an extent and in a degree which make an Englishman a prodigy, he passed the second half of his long and active career among men who hardly knew what it was that he studied. He described himself as unable to read any book except one which began with a B,

<sup>1</sup> "Letters of William Stubbs, Bishop of Oxford." Edited by William Holden Hutton, B.D. London: Archibald Constable and Co., Ltd., 1904.

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meaning *Bradshaw*, and as having no time to take a seidlitz powder. About his friend and younger contemporary, Dr. Creighton, there may be much argument, and two opinions. For, though there were many bishops, and only one man who could finish the "History of the Papacy During the Reformation," nobody could deny that Creighton made a very good bishop indeed.

Not even his faithful editor, Mr. Hutton, can assert as much of Stubbs. Except personal religion and personal kindness, he had no episcopal qualities at all. He was not a preacher, or an administrator, or an organiser, or a man of business. He did not suffer fools gladly; he cared nothing for music; he thoroughly disliked all shows; he was not at home in Convocation, or in London society, or in the House of Lords; his politics were pure Toryism of the most uncompromising kind. Of the statesmanship which restrains followers, or conciliates opponents, he never showed a trace. He would have thought it "underhand." He could not away with dissenters; and when a Wesleyan school asked for an "occasional monitor," he suggested that the Non-conformist conscience was meant. Of lawyers he had a holy horror, so that the mere fact of

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a clergyman being under the ban of the Courts gave him a claim upon Stubbs's sympathies. He was so little a man of the world that, when he sat with Lord Coleridge on the Ritual Commission, he marvelled to find the Lord Chief Justice of England an Erastian, or believer in the supreme authority of the State. None of these peculiarities prevented Stubbs from being a true historian, or a most lovable man. A clergyman who had them all could only have become a good bishop by a miracle ; and the age of miracles has ceased.

The character of Dr. Stubbs must inspire even those who did not know him with reverence and affection. It is indeed wholesome to read of a life so honest, simple, manly, and true. The idea of cant or pretence was loathsome to him. When he was bored by a long service, with many hymns, he said so. Most things did bore him, except history, real religion, and fun. His humour was irrepressible ; and he seldom attempted to repress it. He did not even require an audience. I remember, when I was at Oxford, contemplating with awe the Professor of History, as he read in the *Union* a magazine which contained a review by Mr. Froude of Sir George Trevelyan's " *Life of Macaulay*." Suddenly he got up, and put

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down his *Fraser* with the muttered words: "When rhetoricians fall out, historians may come by their own." That seems to me more artistic than Mr. Hutton's solemn description of Hallam as "the strangest of all pretenders to impartiality where any Churchman or Church question was concerned." Hallam was a Whig. Stubbs was a Tory. It is possible to admire one without sneering at the other; and Stubbs, at least, paid Hallam the compliment of stopping where he began. Mr. Hutton is apparently a prey to the delusion that there can be only one kind of history and one kind of historian. Stubbs never forgot that he was a clergyman, or, as Mr. Hutton says, a Churchman. But it would be as bigoted to complain of him on that ground, as to find fault with Hallam for taking the side of the laity. Stubbs, like Hallam, had his prejudices; like Hallam, he was human, and he was always loyal to the Church he served. What was perhaps most admirable and most touching was the quaint homeliness, the simple modesty with which he concealed his vast store of laboriously acquired information. Not even the self-sacrificing generosity with which, in spite of his large family, he cut down all needless expenses that he might have more

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to give away, is so truly Christian as his unnatural freedom from the pride of intellect or knowledge.

It was no easy path to learning that he took. Although he came of a good old Yorkshire stock, and his forebears had been yeomen time out of mind, his father could not send him to a public school, or to a good school of any kind ; and he would not have gone to Oxford if he had not been taken as a servitor at Christchurch. He had, of course, great natural ability, and a memory which never failed him. But he read prodigiously before he won his First Class and his Fellowship at Trinity. If he owed his early chance to Archbishop Longley, whom he always gratefully revered, from the moment he set foot in Christchurch he did everything for himself. He was never tired of reading, and he never forgot what he read. If he had become a College Tutor, he would certainly have been popular, and would probably have written some of the wittiest rhymes in the Oxford anthology. In this respect he began badly, as Mr. Hutton needlessly illustrates. But he steadily improved ; and his well-known lines on Froude and Kingsley, too familiar for quotation, have all the marks of a good epigram, except brevity. On the other hand,

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he found the country, as Creighton found it after him, propitious for a student's life. He had no great love of it in itself; and he regarded two daily services in his church as an obligation. Like Creighton, he took pupils, one of whom was Mr. Swinburne. Here, again, Mr. Hutton is unfortunate, and with less excuse than before. Because Mr. Swinburne wrote him a warm and affectionate letter about his old tutor, Mr. Hutton must needs make a personal attack upon the late Master of Balliol, to whom Mr. Swinburne was sincerely and deeply attached. Although there was not much in common between Stubbs and Jowett, they were on friendly terms; and Stubbs became Chaplain at Balliol while Jowett was Master. But even a "Churchman" is intolerable to Mr. Hutton, when he happens to be a Broad Churchman. While vicar of Navestock, in Essex, Stubbs was also a guardian of the poor and a diocesan inspector of schools. When Archbishop Longley was translated from York to Canterbury, in 1862, he made Stubbs librarian at Lambeth, and in 1863 his appointment by Sir John Romilly, to edit for the famous "Rolls Series" the "Chronicles of Richard the First," was a vast benefit to learning. His characters of Richard.



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himself, of Dunstan, of Henry the Second, of Edward the First, proved to historical students that a new historian had arisen, compared with whom Brewer, and Luard, and Shirley were mere antiquaries and Dryasdusts. Although Stubbs was rather afraid of eloquence, and picturesque historians, such as Macaulay, did not appeal to him, yet few men could be more eloquent than he, or more vividly epigrammatic. Take, for instance, the contrast between Richard and Saladin, which is much more than the "trick of telling phrase" that Mr. Hutton calls it.

"Saladin was a good heathen, Richard a bad Christian; set side by side, there is not much to choose between them; judged each by his own standard, there is very much. Could they have changed faith and place, Saladin would have made a better Christian than Richard, and Richard, perhaps, no worse heathen than Saladin; but Saladin's possible Christianity would have been as far above his actual heathenism as Richard's possible heathenism would have been above his actual Christianity."

Mr. Hutton has missed the point. Tricks of phrase do not produce passages like this. It is because Stubbs knew the two men, by

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study and insight, as a contemporary knew them, that he could describe them from the soul outwards, not from the skin inwards. Stubbs's perfect singleness of mind and disinterested love of truth for its own sake, his native Yorkshire shrewdness, combined with the thoroughness and accuracy of his research, qualified him, as no other man was qualified, to find the living among the dead, and to draw from musty documents a human drama. Although he said, in reference to Buckle, that he did not believe in the philosophy of history, he certainly did not treat history as a science. He was full of historic aversions and predilections, from the days of Dunstan to his own. He communicated his politics without reserve to Freeman, who certainly did not share them. In 1859, he was for Austria against the "wretched Italians," and felt "extreme contempt" for Victor Emmanuel. Perhaps Freeman may have felt more inclined to agree when Stubbs told him that no dissenter could write a History of England, because they had no ancestors and could see nothing good before the Reformation. Stubbs was fond of drawing pedigrees; and he must have known that every one has the same number of ancestors, whether they were ennobled, beheaded, or left

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to themselves. If he were joking, one can only say that he usually jokes with less difficulty, and more success. As, for example, in a letter about Froude: "He mauls Cardinal Pole pretty considerably, but *I think it is the cheapest thing to do*, as Gardiner and Bonner both come so much better out of any examination than he does;" or about Capitular Masses, when "the question turned into what were Chapter-Houses used for, to which I cannot give an answer; nor, I think, can he—probably to get cold in;" or in his quaint ejaculation that he likes "the men who passed under the old system better than the Balliolised idiots who get classes under the new."

In 1866, Mr. Goldwin Smith resigned the Chair of Modern History at Oxford. With the possible exception of Halford Vaughan, no such brilliant lecturer had been known in the University. He was an advanced Liberal, not to say a Radical, and had taken a prominent part in the politics of the day. Lord Derby, who was Chancellor of Oxford as well as Prime Minister, could hardly be expected to keep up the Liberal tradition by appointing Freeman, if a suitable Conservative were to be found. He was indeed fortunate in his choice of Mr. Stubbs, whose studies lay quite out of

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his own line. Mr. Stubbs, for his part, accepted the post without hesitation. Undisturbed research would perhaps have suited him still better. But he had a family to keep, and he must have felt, modest as he was, that no man in England could maintain the historical credit of the University better than he. He was not an impressive lecturer. He seemed to be more interested in his manuscript than in his audience. The single volume which is the sole monument of his professorship shows him at his best, combining with his native sagacity and unrivalled knowledge the eloquence and the humour which he too often suppressed. His character of Henry the Eighth is a literary masterpiece, which neither his predecessor nor his successor has excelled. He knew too much, and assumed too much, for the "Balliolised idiot," or even the ordinary undergraduate, to follow him. His formal deliverances on public occasions, which have alone survived, were models of terseness, thoroughness, and wit. In politics, which cannot be eliminated from history, he stood at opposite poles to the author of "Three English Statesmen." In the unrestrained freedom of his private correspondence, it may be seen what a Tory he was.

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“We are very quiet,” he wrote to Freeman in 1864, “now we have got rid of that Garibaldi. I do not think that Gladstone or Lord Shaftesbury were either of them sensible enough to have sent him away for political reasons. I believe that for once they both spoke the truth when they denied that—but it is what they should have done.”

Stubbs can hardly have believed Lord Shaftesbury to be a liar, whatever he may then have thought of Mr. Gladstone; and one must not take too seriously his persistent chaff of Freeman. Nevertheless, his hostility to the Italian movement was genuine, and of a piece with his lifelong distaste for Liberalism. He was too honourable a man, morally too great a man, to abuse his position as professor for the interests or the purposes of a party. As he said himself in his Inaugural Lecture, his object was not to make Whigs or Tories, but to make them good Tories or good Whigs. As for Radicals, he would, I think, have left them to the police, with perhaps a saving clause for Freeman, Green, and Mr. Bryce.

When he came to deal with facts, his love of truth prevailed over all other considerations, though it was certain that the cause of the

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mediæval Church would not suffer in his hands. He made no secret from the first of his conviction that history justified the ways of God to man. He described himself as "steeped in clerical and Conservative principles." Conservative he certainly was. But what did he mean by "clerical"? He has himself answered the question, in defining "the clerical spirit and mind" to be that "which regards truth and justice above all things, which believes what it believes firmly and intelligently, but with a belief that is fully convinced that truth and justice must in the end confirm the doctrine that it upholds, with a belief that party statement and highly coloured pictures of friend and foe alike are dangerous enemies of truth and justice, and damage in the long run the cause that employs them; that all sides have everything to gain and nothing to lose by full and fair knowledge of the truth."

This is not perhaps a good specimen of the Professor's style, either from a logical or from a grammatical point of view. But why a layman should object to the substance of it, I cannot imagine. Stubbs can hardly have supposed that Freeman or Mr. Goldwin Smith would have put any other thing above truth

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and justice. Nor would he have cited his colleague at Cambridge, the Reverend Charles Kingsley, as one who never drew highly coloured pictures of friend or foe. He once said of himself: "What a good layman I should have made!" and to use "clerical" in the sense of "religious" is to put oneself on a level with Sir Wilfred Witwould, who thought that "orthodox" was the Greek for claret. Even in his Inaugural Lecture Professor Stubbs could not abstain from the clerical remark that the present of Italy, as distinguished from her past, was a "living death." But, after all, in a teacher of history it is knowledge, not opinion, that matters.

Professor Stubbs had little or no sympathy with modern Oxford. Liberalism in politics he thought foolish. Liberalism in theology he thought wrong. It says much for the kindness of his heart and his fidelity to friendship that he never ceased his intimacy with John Richard Green, who gave up his Orders and became a Freethinker. When he found a volume of Renan, he put it in the waste-paper basket, though Renan was, at least, a great Oriental scholar, and as little like the "shallow infidel" as need be. He had not much belief in examinations; and for

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philosophy, idealist or materialist, he had no taste. His leader in academic matters was Dr. Pusey, his staunchest ally was Dr. Liddon, and in his first sermon from the University pulpit on the 3rd of November, 1867, he made the astounding statement that, "with a few notable exceptions, the whole of the popular Press was ostentatiously and implacably set against religion." Unless by religion he meant the peculiar tenets associated with the name of Pusey, a wilder assertion was never made; and, little as Stubbs knew of the world, it is quite unpardonable in him to have made it. But we forget trifles like this when we come to consider the "Constitutional History of England," which was published in three volumes during the years from 1874 to 1878. Mr. Hutton is never tired of comparing this work with the "Decline and Fall," thus doing it a great injustice. Stubbs would have been the last man to range himself with the greatest of all English, perhaps of all, historians. Gibbon has neither equal nor second; and the only subsequent historian who has approached him in the magnitude of his task, or the breadth of his treatment, is Finlay. Stubbs's real rivals are Hallam and Milman, whom he surpassed in learning,



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if not in practical wisdom. He aspired rather to the German ideal, and, when the first volume appeared, a contemporary critic remarked that it was rather a German than an English book. And yet Stubbs, as his name implies, was English to the core. He had the love of liberty, though not of Liberalism; the dislike of sentiment; the hatred of equivocation and indirectness; the aversion from "the fetid atmosphere of a Court," which the inhabitants of these islands cherish, or used to cherish, as virtues. He knew a man as his brother Yorkshiremen know a horse. Although he laid stress in his Preface upon the fact that he was writing a history of institutions, there is plenty of flesh and blood on his bones. He knew how to say much in few words, as in the case of Henry Beaufort.

"The Cardinal of England passed away; not, as the great poet has described him, in the pangs of a melodramatic despair, but with the same businesslike dignity in which for so long he had lived and ruled."

Sometimes, but not often, he let himself go. Henry the Fifth excited all his enthusiasm.

"He was religious, pure in life, temperate, liberal, careful and yet splendid, merciful,

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truthful, and honourable . . . a brilliant soldier, a sound diplomatist, an able organiser and consolidator of all forces at his command; the restorer of the English Navy, the founder of our military, international, and maritime law."

To the Plantagenets, and the England of the Middle Ages, such ample justice had never been done before. Stern moralist as he was, though making dangerously "liberal" allowance for the vices of "Churchmen" and kings, he had the human sympathy without which it is not really possible to reconstruct the past. The "Select Charters," which preceded his greater work, displayed his initial power, and vindicated his right to be an authoritative exponent of the Constitution. He himself thought that he was better appreciated in Germany than in England. But in Freeman he had the same sort of champion as Huxley was to Darwin; and Freeman used the columns of the *Saturday Review* to trumpet his fame, until he must have been almost sick of it himself. He was not blind to the faults of his trumpeting friends. He perceived that Freeman's iteration deserved an unclerical epithet, and he had no faith whatever in the enterprise which produced Green's "Short History of the English People."

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“For a popular history,” he wrote to Freeman, “such as he contemplates, surely Charles Knight and the *Pictorial* people have done what is necessary and possible from existing materials.”

Wisdom did not die with Charles Knight; and every one knows what a splendid success Green’s book had. That Stubbs did not altogether like it, is clear from his letters. His views of Charles the First and of Laud were, as he says, fundamentally different from Green’s. Even on George the Third he would not trust him. Freeman was more remote from the topics that burn; and Stubbs would indeed have been ungrateful if he had not admired Freeman.

“Stubbs was not satisfied,” says Mr. Hutton with extreme unction, “to be wholly without pastoral cares.” It must, however, be admitted that very little sufficed. When, in 1875, nine years after resigning Navestock in Essex, he accepted Cholderton in Wiltshire, it was on condition that he “might legally count as residence in his benefice the whole of the term-times at Oxford, and would still be entitled to three months’ leave without licence,” which used to be called French leave. The Church of England is famous

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for her admirable elasticity; and perhaps this is as good an instance of it as could be found. It is pleasant to add that he did really visit Cholderton for three months in the summer, and was thought "a nice kind gentleman" by his flock. He did not think Mr. Disraeli a nice kind gentleman when in this same year he gave the Deanery of Ripon, which would just have suited Stubbs, to another; and he complained rather bitterly that he himself "had not let down the party to which he belonged." In 1879, however, Lord Beaconsfield gave him a Canonry at St. Paul's. It was not altogether a suitable appointment, for the Canons of St. Paul's ought to be popular preachers. Stubbs should have been Canon of Christchurch and Professor of Ecclesiastical History, instead of Dr. Bright, a far less able man. Still, it was a welcome recognition, even from the unhonoured head of his own party; and it enabled him once more to be happy without the cure of souls. It also brought him into close relations with Dean Church, which would have been an advantage to any one. As might be expected, his sermons did not draw large congregations; and he characteristically remarked that the newspapers, after stating that Mr. This or Dr. That preached

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in the morning, added: "In the afternoon *the pulpit was occupied* by the Canon in residence." But the Canonry had the great merit of making him comfortable, and enabling him to pursue the work of his life without distraction. Unfortunately, he allowed himself to be put on the Ecclesiastical Courts Commission, where "every one had a psalm and no doctrine and no patience." What had he to do with such futilities? The lawyers, especially Lord Coleridge, only irritated him by reading the Reformation Acts as if they saw them for the first time. But he himself proposed a fantastic scheme of referring to the bishops points considered by the Lord Chancellor doctrinal, which Parliament would never look at, except as a curiosity. The Judicial Committee he thought a "foul thing." It has at least stopped the persecution of heretics, which is a fouler thing still. As, however, nothing came of the Commission, and ecclesiastical appeals have been stopped by the veto of the bishops, one can only regret that so much of Stubbs's time was wasted in a manner so unprofitable.

Then the crash came. Up to this point the career of Dr. Stubbs had been perfectly suited to his talents. He was the most learned

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of English historians, and he had, for nearly twenty years, filled the Chair of Modern History at Oxford with European renown. For five years he had been also a Canon of St. Paul's, in easy circumstances, a dignitary of the Church which he adorned. He would have been a perfect Dean, either of his beloved Ripon or of any other cathedral. The one ecclesiastical office for which nature had unfitted him was a bishopric; and that was what Mr. Gladstone offered him in February 1884. The see was Chester, out of which the modern dioceses of Manchester and Liverpool had been carved. Mr. Gladstone had the best intentions; and he knew, of course, that Stubbs was a political opponent. Mr. Hutton quotes the high authority of Mr. Bryce for the fact that one of Mr. Gladstone's "reasons for offering a bishopric to Dr. Stubbs was the importance he attached to his knowledge of ecclesiastical law and custom." There are some things which the least intelligent reader may be assumed to know; and it would have been more interesting to learn what the other reasons were. A modern bishop does not require either great intellect or great learning. Besides the moral and religious qualifications which may be taken for granted, he

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needs dignity, courtesy, aptitude for business, patience of detail, knowledge of men, and taste for ceremonial observances. Stubbs's kindness made him courteous; but he had an unerring eye for a bore or a fool. Ceremony, which he called "fuss," he detested; and even Mr. Hutton admits that as a professor he was undignified. No one could help respecting his simple goodness and his transcendent ability. But the chief result of making him a bishop was to prove the truth of his own remark, that he would have been an excellent layman. He hesitated, and took advice. Church, Liddon, and the present Dean of St. Paul's, all counselled acceptance. If biographies tell the truth, about which there can in this case be no sort of doubt, such is the invariable consequence of consulting clerical friends. Nor could any one deny that Dr. Stubbs would increase the reputation of the episcopal Bench, where none of his colleagues, save Dr. Lightfoot, then Bishop of Durham, could compare with him in learning. Lightfoot, however, was a practical man; and if he had remained at Cambridge, he would not in all probability have written a standard book. Dr. Creighton, who afterwards deserted history for episcopacy, became an excellent

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bishop. He delighted to exercise his great mental powers in work which bore immediate fruit; and he was naturally fitted to deal with men. To Stubbs, nine-tenths of his new duties seemed sheer waste of time. His heart and mind were in his books. Earnestly pious and devout, generous almost to a fault with money, the Bishop of Chester grudged all outlay which was not charitable, and every hour spent in "that worst form of trifling called business." A theologian, Mr. Hutton tells us, said that he had a "sceptical mind," meaning, no doubt, that he declined to accept historical conclusions without historical evidence. He certainly believed in apostolical succession. But he did not believe in diocesan conferences; and he was incapable of concealing his want of belief. He took refuge in that incorrigible humour which was rather stimulated than quenched by the episcopal office. It is indeed melancholy to reflect that, before his experience of Mr. Gladstone's cruel kindness, he had proposed to write a "Constitutional History of the Reformation," which all the other bishops on the Bench could not have compiled among them.

The Bishop of Chester was said, by one who knew him well, never to have changed an



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opinion. His tastes and habits were not more flexible. Though a High Churchman by conviction, regarding Erastianism as anathema, he detested elaborate ritual, and was not even fond of hymns. Asked on one occasion if he thought them appropriate, he answered with a quotation from the last of them: "Oh, dear me, yes, to be sure."

"Yet saints their watch are keeping,  
Their cry goes up: How long?"

Bishops, and even mere clergymen, can say with impunity what in laymen would be thought profane. Yet some of Dr. Stubbs's more solemn incumbents thought they sometimes detected in him a slight inclination to flippancy. If he had been without it, he would have died of a plethora of "functions." "Life," he wrote to Freeman from Chester, "is as much a burden here as it is everywhere else: the advantage of being a bishop is that one has no time to think about it." He had to spend a large part of his time in trains; and could only "get an hour now and then for William of Malmesbury." His humour was his salvation. "What a great many people there are in the world," he wrote on his return from Italy, "to whom the disestablishment of

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the English Church will make no difference." Unfortunately, though not unexpectedly, he could not see what difference a great many things made which bishops were supposed to regard as very serious indeed. He emphatically declined to be "organised" himself; and had not the slightest wish to organise other people. He wanted to be let alone, to pray without fuss, and to study in peace. He had always been a great novel-reader; and he now read more novels than ever. Putting him at Chester was like putting him on the rack. But there was worse torture to follow.

Lord Melbourne used to say that the bishops died to spite him. They resigned to spite Stubbs. The resignation of Dr. Jacobson was the first stroke. The resignation of Dr. Mackarness was the final blow. A retiring bishop, it may be explained, takes away a third of the income, and leaves all the work. Stubbs had found himself a poorer man at Chester than he was at St. Paul's. Just as Jacobson's death had improved his pecuniary position, he was offered another see burdened with another pension. Lord Salisbury, like Mr. Gladstone, was a well-meaning man. He thought, not unnaturally, that Oxford was entitled to the most learned bishop on the Bench; and Dr.

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Stubbs thought that he could not refuse heavier work. So he accepted, and then he suffered acute misery. The Bishop of Oxford does not live in the city, but in a country house called Cuddesdon, remote from railways, with gardeners, and coachmen, and all the rest of it. To this plain and homely scholar life in such a place was repugnant. There was, in his opinion, only one thing to be done with Cuddesdon; and that was to sell it. But to this the Ecclesiastical Commissioners would by no means give their consent; and Archbishop Benson, in a letter of remarkable shrewdness, observed that "the Bishop of Oxford is not wanted in *that* Cathedral. It would be impolitic and not for the good of the University that he should eclipse the Dean in affairs, and worse more widely that the Dean should eclipse him." The idea of any one eclipsing the magnificent potentate who was at that time Dean of Christchurch is hardly conceivable. But, Chancellor of the Garter as he was, it is possible that Dr. Stubbs might have been eclipsed by Dr. Liddell. At any rate, as a man who makes his bed must lie on it, he had to live at Cuddesdon. He became restless, impatient, hurried, disgusted with trivial engagements, apprehensive of interruptions.

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The parsons of his agricultural diocese were oppressed by poverty; and he had three glass houses, which he would not even look at. He would have given all the glass houses in the world for the chance of reading at the Bodleian. Occasionally, he stayed in the Lollard's Tower at Lambeth, as when he attended Mr. George Smith's Dictionary Dinner, and walked home. "I was quite well, thank you," he said, to Mr. Sidney Lee the next morning, "but my boots were tight." Many good things were said at the dinner, but nothing better, or at least funnier, than that.

The plain truth is, that this great student and sagacious historian was, as Bishop of Oxford, bored to death. Without the safety-valve of his humour, there would have been some terrific explosions; and even Mr. Hutton would have had to admit that his hero could despise the office of a bishop. As it was, he sailed uncommonly near the wind when an unkind fate put him on the Archbishop's Court at Lambeth, to try the Bishop of Lincoln for unlawful ceremonial in a parish church. On that occasion, at all events, Stubbs had no business to be there. He did not believe that the Bishop of Lincoln ought to be tried. He did not believe that the Archbishop of Canter-

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bury had any jurisdiction to try him. He did not think that the lawyers knew what they were talking about. He regarded it all as a sham and a solemn farce; and he did not hesitate to say so. "It is not a Court," he kept saying; "it is an archbishop sitting in his library." The whole case should be left to a jury of matrons, whom he named. "How does his Grace get his patience? Is it from the Stores? I sit and admire him and then sleep it off." His Grace was in his element, thoroughly enjoying himself, and required no commiseration.

"The use of crossing next appears  
Too hard for our digestion;  
The question of the cross remains  
A very crucial question."

Now it was verse, then it was prose.

"Oh, the wearing weariness of it all! Once the earth was without form and void; now it is full of forms, and has not ceased to be void. . . . Certainly this court is quite informal and the subject void of all interest. One feels inclined to deal with forms without any ceremony, and with ceremonies without much formality."

Such quaint cries of despair never went up before, either from a bishop, or from a judge,

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or even from an assessor. A good man gone wrong Bishop Stubbs could hardly be called. A great man out of place he certainly was. The thing of which he had the greatest horror was wasting time; and nobody wastes more time than a modern bishop. His last duty, which it did not require a bishop to perform, was at once congenial and heroic. The death of Queen Victoria, in January 1901, found him depressed in spirits, and enfeebled by illness. He had always felt a reverent admiration for the Queen; and, in spite of medical warnings, he obeyed the King's command to preach at St. George's, Windsor, the day after the funeral, which he also attended. His simple, manly, straightforward sermon is compared, with curious infelicity, by Mr. Hutton, to the splendid and highly artificial orations of Bossuet, Massillon, and Bourdaloue. It was a characteristic utterance from the Bishop's heart, and therefore as unlike the "French preachers of the great age" as anything could well be. It was his last public effort. On the 22nd of April he died, in his seventy-seventh year, three months after his friend and brother historian, Mandell Creighton, who was almost twenty years his junior.

Both to the lay and to the ecclesiastical

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mind it must seem that Professor Stubbs's acceptance of a bishopric was the mistake of his life. That he was a great bishop, only flattery will assert. That he was a great, though not a popular, historian, is the unanimous opinion of the few who are competent to judge him. Nine-tenths of his episcopal work was mechanical and secular. His History always upholds the cause of the Church, whose loyal and faithful minister he would, in any circumstances, have been. What the Church and the world have lost by his "hallowing," as Freeman called it, we shall never know; but we may guess. No man of equal learning has treated the English Reformation from his peculiar platform. We can find Protestantism and eloquence in Froude, Catholicism and accuracy in Lingard. But Stubbs was a sturdy Anglican, whose sympathies were neither with Ridley, nor with Gardiner, but with Laud. Although he would never have perverted evidence or falsified a fact, he would have told the story better than any one else could tell it, as an Englishman and an ecclesiastic. That the Bishop of Rome neither hath nor ought to have any jurisdiction within this realm of England, Stubbs held as strongly as Froude. He adhered with equal firmness to

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the doctrine, that the Church of England had never lost its identity since Britain was converted to the Christian faith. He was not, like Gibbon, a citizen of the world, with an impartial contempt for everything except historical truth. He was, like Macaulay, an intensely patriotic Englishman, and as much a Tory as Macaulay was a Whig. His Liberal friends, such as Freeman and Green, never made the smallest impression on him. While he admired Gladstone's Churchmanship, he abhorred his politics. I do not myself believe in absolutely impartial history. What we want is both sides. There is no book in the English language to supply the place of that which Stubbs would have written on the Reformation. Creighton's admirable and delightful "History of the Papacy" is, in setting, Italian, not English; and no one would guess that it was written by a clergyman. Stubbs would have given the clerical and Conservative view of Henry the Eighth's legislation, upon which the whole controversy really turns. He would have done much more. He would have drawn an indelible picture of a great constitutional struggle, a struggle for first principles, between Church and King. He might have gone on to depict the rise of Puritanism, the temperate



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or temporising policy of Elizabeth, the change of Tudors for Stuarts, the great catastrophe that followed. He would not have settled questions which will be debated and disputed till the end of time. But he would have written a book which no one who took part in them could ever neglect, which would have remained the classical statement of a Tory Churchman's historic creed. *Disr. aliter visum*, he said, when he did not get the Deanery of Ripon. When he did get the Bishopric of Oxford, he said that he had committed suicide. If historicide be a crime, he was a criminal. "In they broke, those people of importance," Mr. Gladstone and Lord Salisbury, and slew, not a life, but an immortality. But he was himself *particeps criminis*.

In a quiet deanery, Dr. Stubbs would have had all the clerical opportunities he desired, and could have done work which would never have died. What he did as a bishop, hundreds could have done as well, and scores could have done better. His successor in the See of Oxford has contributed to this volume just three pages, which have, no doubt, an esoteric meaning for clergymen, but, to my lay mind, mean nothing at all. Every page written by Stubbs himself is full of significance, and often

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## *Stray Leaves*

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suggests far more than it says. That he was an honour to his order, is of course true. But at this moment there is hardly an English bishop known outside his diocese except the Archbishop of Canterbury, who travels, and the Bishop of Hereford, who represents the people in the House of Lords. Yet they are all excellent men; pious, efficient, and industrious, with no sense of divided allegiance to neglected studies. In the House of Lords Bishop Stubbs did not count. What did his dioceses, apart from the University, care for his erudition? As much as a public meeting cares for a Senior Wrangler. Creighton had great gifts for administration, for speaking, for managing men. Stubbs had none. He was the best joker on the Bench, and the most persistent grumbler. Humanly speaking, he was bored with his life. History never bored him, never tired him, never exhausted his keenness, his sagacity, his patience, his love of truth, his faith in the providential government of the world. A late Prime Minister used to say that the clergy might be exhaustively divided into two classes. The first consisted of those who wanted to be bishops, and were unfit to be. The second comprised those who were fit to be bishops, and did not want to be.

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## *Bishops and Historians*

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Stubbs belonged to neither class. Although he thought for some time that his Party neglected him, he was free from ambition. He was a victim to a sense of duty, and to a belief that episcopal functions were religious in some sense in which history is not. The awful line of the great Epicurean poet ascribes to religion the sacrifice of an innocent girl. The religion of which Lucretius speaks was Pagan, as Mr. Pecksniff said, with regret, of the Sirens. That must surely be a narrow view of historical study which excludes it from the field of Christian labour. Nor does it conduce to reverence for the ideal of a Christian Church, that it should involve the principle of a round man for a square hole.

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*Mr. Balfour's Horæ Subsecivæ*<sup>1</sup>

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**I**T is not perhaps, in all respects, desirable that a Prime Minister should divert himself with politics. Mr. Gladstone used to say that a change of employment was the best recreation; and he found it in controversial theology. Mr. Balfour finds it in metaphysics, which are safe, because, since the time of Plato, they have led to no very definite conclusion, while they are profitable as an excellent sharpener of the wits. No public man since the time of Bulwer Lytton, not even Mr. Haldane, has been more frankly metaphysical than Mr. Balfour. Nor is he only metaphysical himself. He is the cause that metaphysics are in other men. Mr. Wyndham is, perhaps, the most distinguished of his intellectual pupils. But, while even the otherwise united Party which he leads are believed to differ in opinion upon the merits, and even the meaning, of his economic doctrines, they are all ready to adopt, if not to read, his Address as President of the British Association in

<sup>1</sup> "Essays and Addresses." By the Right Hon. Arthur James Balfour, M.P. Edinburgh: David Douglas, 1905.

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## *Horæ Subsecivæ*

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1904. In reprinting that dexterous document Mr. Balfour has done well. Charming in tone, artfully simple in style, graceful and courteous in its patronage of such amateur philosophers as "John Mill," it is adapted with singular perfection to an audience which might be called scientific as the congregation at Westminster Abbey might be called theological. Whatever else may be said, or thought, of Mr. Balfour as a Prime Minister, we must all revere and admire his intellectual enthusiasm, his genuine and absorbing interest in things of the mind. He is the exact opposite of Sir Robert Walpole, whose tastes outside politics were trivial or low. Mr. Balfour's brain is never idle, and never busy with unworthy themes. This volume contains several essays which would be well worth reading if they had been written by a Secretary, or even an Under Secretary, of State. "The Pleasures of Reading" is altogether delightful, if not original, or profound. "Bishop Berkeley's Life and Letters" and "Handel" belong to a higher order. The thorough knowledge which they show is accompanied by a sympathetic insight and a forcible presentment, which give them a value quite independent

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## *Stray Leaves*

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of their authorship. On the other hand, the review of Mr. Morley's "Life of Cobden" might have been left where it was. It was published just twenty years before Mr. Chamberlain thought fit to revive a controversy which for forty years had been regarded as closed, and has no direct bearing upon any question of the day. But Mr. Balfour does not like Cobden, nor did he at that time like Cobden's biographer. The book irritated and annoyed him. That he should express his irritation and annoyance in a monthly magazine was natural enough. Mr. Balfour, as well as inferior people, is entitled to a reasonable amount of prejudice. He should have remembered Johnson's reply to Boswell's inquiry whether he sometimes had a "fit of narrowness." "Yes, sir, but I do not talk about it." The crime, however, if it be a crime, has brought its own punishment. Mr. Balfour has stereotyped his marvellous discovery, that Cobden "did not rise superior to the ordinary radicalism of the day." After the death of Peel there were three great personal forces in the English politics of the nineteenth century. One was called Cobden, another Gladstone, the third Disraeli. Mr. Balfour would not think much

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## *Horæ Subsecivæ*

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of a critic who said that Disraeli did not rise superior to the ordinary Conservatism of the day, or that Gladstone did not rise superior to the ordinary Liberalism of the day. Such a judgment would be what the French call *saugrenu*. It would pass the bounds of legitimate difference in opinion, and, if seriously meant, would be a disqualification.

The attack on Cobden is in the older part of this book, which first appeared twelve years ago. Four new essays have now been added, one of which is the Sermon to the British Association at Cambridge. Impatient congregations have sometimes started to their feet on the injudicious use by a preacher of the word "Now" at the beginning of a sentence. Mr. Balfour never tries the patience of any one who does not wish to succeed him in office; and he was precluded by custom from repeating the clerical formula. His substitute was to hint in his final words his "own personal opinion that as Natural Science grows, it leans more, not less, upon a teleological interpretation of the universe." The doctrine of final causes has never been insinuated with more delicacy, or dismissed with more despatch. But, if the transition from electricity was sudden, it was also ortho-

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## *Stray Leaves*

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dox, and scarcely more abrupt than the application boldly made in Eton chapel of an unpromising text from the book of Esther about the posts of King Ahasuerus. "My brethren," said the Fellow who occupied the pulpit, "the Word of God operates upon the heart of man as quickly as King Ahasuerus's posts conveyed his letters." Mr. Balfour's lecture on the "Nineteenth Century" is one of his happiest efforts. "Poet-philosophers like Bacon" must have resembled him in something else than the poetic faculty, unless, indeed, Mr. Balfour credits Bacon with works still attributed by the man in the street to Shakespeare. But that is a small point, and the end of this essay deals with a very large question indeed. Mr. Balfour is sometimes too fond of indulging in those cheap paradoxes which are no more than inverted platitudes. Here is a paradox in the true sense, a theory which runs counter to received opinion, and yet may embody a profound truth.

"We have frequently seen in the history of thought that any development of the mechanical conception of the physical world gives an impulse to materialistic speculation. Now, if the goal to which, consciously or unconsciously, the modern physicist is pressing,



be ever reached, the mechanical view of things will receive an extension and a completeness never before dreamed of. There would then in truth be only one Natural Science, namely Physics; and only one kind of explanation, namely the dynamic. . . . Would this conception, in its turn, foster a new and refined materialism? For my own part, I conjecture that it would not. I believe that the very completeness and internal consistency of such a view of the physical world would establish its inadequacy. The very fact that within it there seemed no room for Spirit would convince mankind that Spirit must be invoked to explain it."

Whether physical science is really capable of establishing all these grand conclusions, I do not know. But even if they be established, the mystery of life, the miracle that we can put our hands to our mouths, would remain as miraculous and as mysterious as ever.

Most people who take up Mr. Balfour's book will go straight to the politics and stay there. Politics do not mix well with other things, even when, as in this case, they are not serious. "Economic Notes on Insular Free Trade," and "Dr. Clifford on Education," do not resemble Mr. Balfour's metaphysics,

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## *Stray Leaves*

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which are serious enough. They are like Coleridge's metaphysics, which, as Lamb said, were "only his fun." The fun might not be very funny if the joker were not Prime Minister. But then that is just the point of the joke. Free Trade is a term of art, which has a fixed and definite meaning. It means a tariff for revenue only. Protection means a tariff for the benefit of the native manufacturer, at the cost, as Protectionists say, of the foreigner, or, as the Free Traders say, of the native consumer. Unless those definitions, which are more than a hundred years old, be accepted, controversy is futile, and leads to nothing. A Free Trader who denounces protection may be asked if he does not think that the country ought to be protected by the army and navy. If he extols Free Trade, he may be asked whether he wishes for free trade in liquors, for free trade in poisons, for free trade in obscene literature, for free trade in Chinamen. A judge suggested from the Bench, the other day, that there should be a moderate duty on foreign revolvers. He meant that they ought to be prohibited because they were used for criminal purposes. I dare say they ought, and home-made revolvers too. There would be nothing contrary to Free Trade in either

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## *Horæ Subsecivæ*

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step. But it did not strike the judicial mind that the object of a tax is to raise money for the public service, and that, if it be a prohibitive tax, it defeats its own object. It is unlawful, I believe, to make nitro-glycerine without a license. That has no more to do with the doctrine of Free Trade than with the differential calculus.

Not having taken the trouble to master the beggarly elements of economic science, Mr. Balfour drifts helplessly down the stream, without a rudder or an oar. He seems to think that there are many varieties of Free Trade, and that a statesman, like a customer, may choose which he prefers. There are varieties of Protection, though they are varieties of degree, not of kind. Free Trade is one and indivisible. A man must be a Free Trader, or not. It is unilateral, having nothing to do with the examples set by other countries, good or bad. So far as this country is concerned, it is entirely self-regarding, exclusively English. It was adopted by Englishmen for Englishmen, to suit British interests, and British interests alone. Cobden thought that foreign nations would follow suit. He was wrong. He was a bad prophet, if indeed the phrase be not tautological. But

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## *Stray Leaves*

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if that proves him to have been a bad economist, logic, like prophecy, must have perished from the world. Mr. Villiers once said in my hearing that he never shared Cobden's interest in what foreign countries did. "If Free Trade is a good thing," he said, "for God's sake let us keep it to ourselves." The commercial supremacy of Great Britain is not entirely due to Free Trade. It has been assisted and promoted by the Protectionist tariffs of other countries. The policy of profiting by foreign sugar-bounties might by austere moralists be considered narrow and selfish. From the purely patriotic point of view its wisdom could not be doubted. If Free Trade must be universal, it has of course never existed; and the fierce controversies of 1846 were waged about nothing at all. As for "free imports," they do not exist here and now. A very large part of our taxation is raised by duties on imported tobacco and imported spirits. No Free Trader objects, because every penny added to the price of spirits and tobacco goes into the Treasury and is spent upon the nation. There is a dangerously large number of persons who wish to divert taxation into their own pockets; and Mr. Balfour is their innocent advocate. Not

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## *Horæ Subsecivæ*

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without reason did Sir Robert Peel say, that he should leave a name execrated by every monopolist. The only other name which they hate as much as his is the name of Richard Cobden.

Mr. Balfour comes at times so near economic truth, that his failure to attain it is almost miraculous. He thinks that he overthrows what he is pleased to call the "manufacturing ideal" when he says: "Inasmuch as conditions of climate render it obligatory to import many of our luxuries, and conditions of population and manufacture render it obligatory to import many of our necessities, a large export trade is necessary, in order that these things shall be paid for." Clumsily worded as this sentence is, it contains the whole doctrine of Free Trade, and is quite inconsistent with Mr. Balfour's many deviations therefrom. The fundamental difference between a Free Trader and a Protectionist is, that one regards foreign trade as good, and the other regards it as evil. According to the Protectionist, it displaces native employment, and impoverishes the country by draining it of gold. According to the Free Trader, it encourages labour at home, and widens its area by turning it into more productive channels. By admitting, what is

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of course the fact, that imports necessitate exports, Mr. Balfour gives up the Protectionist case, and cuts his own ground from under his own feet. Yet he goes on, with the utmost unconcern, to talk about the world rejecting Free Trade, as if the question were an international one, and as if no country could adopt a tariff for revenue only, unless every other country did the same. "International Free Trade," he tells us, "promotes wealth, because it conduces to an international division of labour." Mr. Balfour falls, here and elsewhere, into the vulgar error of supposing that one country trades with another. The commercial unit is not the nation, but the individual. If foreign individuals were not hampered in neutral markets by the restrictive tariffs of their own Governments, they would have a better chance of underselling their British rivals. The universal adoption of Free Trade would benefit the world, and England as a part of the world. But, though it may be unchristian, it is very tempting for a mere Englishman, to rejoice in the Navigation Laws of the United States, which have tied the hands of American shipowners, and left Englishmen what, if it were not for the Free Traders of Norway, would be almost

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a monopoly of the world's carrying trade. One should always rejoice in the victory of right reason, whatever the consequences to one's self. But insular prejudice, and narrow-minded patriotism, sometimes make one fear lest the fiscal controversy should injure one's own countrymen by leading the United States to abandon a system which places their artisans at the mercy of grasping millionaires. A tariff for revenue only, such as Huskisson, Peel, and Gladstone established in this country, "seems, and has always seemed" to Mr. Balfour, "extraordinarily foolish." The feeble intellects of these bungling Ministers, who were wholly without support beyond the House of Commons, the commercial classes, the working classes, and a few harebrained fanatics, such as Adam Smith, Ricardo, Cobden, and Mill, conceived that free access to foreign markets was an incalculable benefit to England, and that whatever foreigners might do, our best course was to buy in the cheapest market, even if we could not also sell in the dearest. Mr. Balfour exults almost unkindly over the failure of their predictions, and the ruin of their hopes. As Member for Manchester, he is brought into continual contact with the miserable results of the wretched Cobdenite



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craze. The spectacle fills him with gloom, almost with despair. "I see," he says in words which deserve immortality, "I see no satisfactory symptoms," forgetting, in his modesty, that he has raised the price of sugar from six pounds to sixteen pounds a ton. What is the remedy? The situation is almost irretrievable. Only the starving little country of Holland persists in impoverishing itself by adhering to "one-sided Free Trade." Let us, then, be up and doing. Let us no longer "take it lying down." Let us act in the noble spirit of Swift, when he advised the Irish people, not perhaps without a suspicion of irony, to burn all the products of England except her coal. There is one hope, and only one. "The only alternative is to do to foreign nations what they always do to each other." Here is wisdom. Foreign nations have indulged in tariff wars, which wasted their substance, while the British trader said nothing, and took advantage of the opportunity. There was folly. Christ said, "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you." Mr. Balfour says, "Do unto others as ye see them doing." It is not without significance that Cobden's favourite religious exercise was to hear his daughter read the Sermon on the Mount.



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## *Horæ Subsecivæ*

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But it showed a narrow fanatical spirit, which Tariff Reformers and philosophic statesmen have outgrown. If the Prime Minister will read "Mary Barton," he will see what a glorious time the people of Lancashire had in the good old days of Protection and Retaliation, when we did unto others what we saw them doing to themselves.

I do not think that the abstract reasoning of Mr. Balfour's "Notes" will make many converts. But that is not where the element of danger comes in. If the issue between Protection and Free Trade, between a tariff for revenue and a tariff for corruption, could be decided by argument, it would have been decided long ago. Sophistry becomes really formidable when it rests upon cupidity; and there can be no doubt that Free Trade vastly diminishes the chances of a dishonest livelihood. The umbrella-maker, said Bastiat, whom Mr. Balfour would do well to study, is in favour of Free Trade in wood, silk, and whalebone. He merely wants protection for umbrellas. Intelligent and enlightened merchants are Free Traders because they realise that they buy far more things than they sell. Honest ignorance may not see this. But honest ignorance is not what we have to dread. Mr. Balfour has

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supporters of whose existence he is unconscious, and with whom he would not willingly sit at meat. They are men whose mouths water, and whose fingers itch, when they read of corners in American wheat, of growing rich beyond the dreams of avarice by the simple process of starving a district. The antiquated system of benighted Cobdenism, to which this incorrigible old country clings, draws their teeth and blunts their claws. But their cry goes up: How long? They are hustling all they know to be in a big steal; and there is a side of Mr. Balfour's economic scepticism which they regard as good "biz." They are downy coves, who want to have their knives in the Liberal Party for blowing the gaff, and setting the coppers on them. I hope I make myself intelligible. *Verb. sap.*

Mr. Balfour's second contribution to the politics of the day, his reply to Dr. Clifford, is a vigorous and unsparing piece of personal satire. If it had come from a young and ambitious candidate for a seat in Parliament, it would have fulfilled its purpose by drawing attention to the writer. That a Prime Minister, with his heart in metaphysics, should have taken the trouble to compose it, is rather strange. For Mr. Balfour has no vanity to

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## *Horæ Subsecivæ*

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gratify, and never, so to speak, shows off. Still stranger is it that he should not, while he was about it, have been at the pains to discover why the Nonconformists opposed his Education Bill. It seems never to have struck him that they were not all fools, and that they must have a meaning of some kind. He treats them like fractious children who will come to their senses when they have been well shaken, and not before. Dr. Clifford's style is by no means academic; and his monotonous exaggeration palls. He would be much more effective, in the opinion of one humble Liberal, if he were a little quieter. But he is not, as Mr. Balfour seems to suppose, a raving maniac. He knows what he is talking about. He has a case, and chop-logic will not dispose of it. "His constitutional studies," says Mr. Balfour with a sneer, "have apparently convinced him that in an assembly where the majority govern a dissentient minority is a negligible quantity." Even in the House of Commons, the Prime Minister has done his best to make it so. But can he not see the difference between a temporary and a permanent minority? Surely he must sometimes have reflected of late that those who are a minority in this House of Commons may be a majority in the next. But, under

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the Education Act the representatives of the public on the managing body of a "non-provided" school must always be in a minority; and this vital distinction destroys the whole of his argument. No Opposition in Parliament could continue if it did not live in hope of redressing the balance, and crossing the House. Mr. Balfour's favourite polemical weapon is what logicians call *ignoratio elenchi*. Take, for instance, his retort to Dr. Clifford on the subject of the last General Election, when Mr. Balfour and several of his colleagues argued that Liberals might vote for them, because the only question at issue was the inevitability of the war. Who now believes that the war was inevitable I do not stay to inquire, and I quite admit that the British Constitution knows nothing of "mandates," fond as Conservatives are of appealing to them. If Mr. Balfour chooses to say that the electors were simpletons to take him literally, well and good. If it is not chivalrous, it is true. But his references to the abolition of the Corn Laws, to the Irish Land Act of 1881, to the Home Rule Bill of 1886, are wholly immaterial and misleading. Neither in 1841, nor in 1880, nor yet in 1885, was the country told by responsible statesmen that national

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## *Horæ Subsecivæ*

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interests of supreme importance required the severance of Party ties. So again with the question of rates and taxes. Why, asks the Prime Minister, should Dissenters object to paying rates for sectarian schools over which they have no control, when they have paid taxes for them ever since 1870? Even a junior Lord of the Treasury might be expected to perceive that the Education Department represented the taxpayer, and that no school of which the Department did not approve could receive a grant from the public purse. If every school in receipt of rates were subject to the County Council, Mr. Balfour's gibe would have some point. At present it has none. It seems to me, if I may respectfully say so, rather beneath the Prime Minister of England to make an opponent appear ridiculous by carefully leaving out the points of his arguments and the substance of his complaints. Any fool can do it. It is not an occupation for a statesman, even in his leisure hours. Politics spoil this volume. Without them it would be a singularly charming example of what a brilliant, cultivated intellect, open to the best influences of its age and country, can make of time too often wasted in writing unreadable books.

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*Charles Lamb*<sup>1</sup>

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N OBODY can say that Mr. Lucas has not written a complete book. These two bulky tomes, I had almost written "tombs," contain all that is mortal of poor Lamb. He lies buried in them, or under them, as if he had been an Archbishop of Canterbury, or the hero of a hundred fights. It is hard to think of "Lamb the frolic and the gentle" behind so heavy a lock and key. Lighter treatment would have been more becoming to him. His puns are fitter for duodecimos. He said little, and did less, that required exhaustive analysis. Scotsmen, as we know, took him literally. Mr. Lucas takes him biographically, puts a pin through him, and exhibits him in his museum. To Mr. Lucas it never occurs that what the soldier said is not evidence. Any one who said anything about Lamb is called as a witness, and then cross-examined to his credit, or discredit, as the case may be. Lamb would have been bored to death with it all. He would have

<sup>1</sup> "The Life of Charles Lamb." By E. V. Lucas. Two volumes with 50 illustrations. London: Methuen & Co., 1905.

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## Charles Lamb

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sung "Heigh diddle diddle, my son John," and asked to see the gentleman's bumps. Yet it would be very ungrateful to find fault with Mr. Lucas and his methods. Another *Life* of Lamb after this there could hardly be. But, if there were, Mr. Lucas has provided the materials for it. With humble reverence, and patient toil, he has dug up and arranged every conceivable detail about Lamb's progress from the cradle to the grave. All lovers of Lamb, all who keep on the first of April the festival of the human race, have reason to thank this untiring inquisitor for the facts which his researches have laid bare. We all know the Shakespearean enthusiast who wrote a paper on the question whether the husband of the nurse in *Romeo and Juliet*, God rest his soul, was really a merry man, or whether his widow was deceived into thinking so by affectionate partiality for his memory. None of us have forgotten that George Dyer, after calling on Lamb at Islington, walked out of his friend's house into the New River. But here is a photograph of Colebrooke Cottage, with the river running in front of it as natural as may be, and nothing left out, except George himself. Even if Lamb had invented the whole story, the illustration would



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## *Stray Leaves*

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be none the worse for that. The bust of Samuel Salt, the Bencher to whom Lamb's father was clerk, is no less appropriate than decorative. For if there had been no Samuel Salt, Lamb might never have gone to Christ's Hospital; and if he had not gone to Christ's Hospital, he might never have known Coleridge; and if Coleridge had not asked him: "Have you ever heard me preach?" he could hardly have replied: "I've—n—never heard you d—d—do anything else." Mr. Lucas has left no stone unturned. He has neglected no indication. He has deserted no clue. He is not merely Lamb's biographer, but his scientific historian. At the same time, his tact and sense and judgment, his sound taste and good feeling, his devotion to Lamb and suppression of himself, make his book really delightful, and more precious than the most ambitious of critical estimates.

Although Lamb has been dead more than seventy years, there are thousands to whom he seems a familiar friend. Ever since he died, within a few months of Coleridge, his popularity has been growing. The mighty poet, with the deep harmony and rich magic of his glorious verse, sits on an unapproachable throne, too god-like not to be worshipped,



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## *Charles Lamb*

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scarcely human enough to be loved. The perfect essayist, the delicate humourist, who played upon the English language as upon an old fiddle, is never far away from the hearts of his readers. They cannot make a joke without thinking of Charles Lamb, and of how much better he would have turned it. Lamb did not always treat the author of "Kubla Khan" with reverence. But then he knew Coleridge; and we have the great advantage of not knowing him. Any one would have been the better for knowing Charles Lamb, who brought out all that was good in people, and kept back all that was not. Enough, and more than enough, has been made of Carlyle's splenetic outburst, which may well claim the charity of oblivion. Mr. Lucas does well to remind us that Carlyle also called Lamb "humane, ingenuous, pathetic, sportfully much enduring." After all, it would be difficult for the staunchest Agnomaniac to beat that. Thackeray's "Saint Charles" falls far short of it. Mr. Lucas discusses Thackeray's meaning at some length. It does not seem to me very obscure. Most men's practice falls lamentably short of their professions. Lamb's professions fell laudably short of his practice. Unselfish, uncomplaining, tender-hearted, affec-

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## *Stray Leaves*

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tionate, faithful, and sincere, he loved to hold himself out as flippant, frivolous, self-indulgent, mischievous, and heartless. Hypocrites abhorred him. Pharisees thanked God that they were not like him. He didn't care. He lived for his sister, for his friends, for his books, laughing at all pretence of superior merit, doing those little nameless unremembered acts of kindness and of love which are the best portion, even of a good man's life. He was not much given to religious observances, or to formality of any kind. But he had a Master. At the end of a long conversation on "Persons one would wish to have seen," which ultimately led to Stratford-on-Avon, Lamb said: "There is only one other person I can ever think of after this. If Shakespeare was to come into the room, we should all rise up to meet him; but if that person was to come into it, we should all fall down and try to kiss the hem of his garment." It was seldom indeed that Lamb let himself go like this. He was no Methodist; he inclined to scoff at clerical and ecclesiastical pretensions. He sometimes said what in other people would have been profane. One fervent admirer, Alfred Ainger, late Master of the Temple, was distressed by this trait in him. But it was his hatred of

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## *Charles Lamb*

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humbug, his objection to what Sterne called "the wagging of the beard." His delicious drollery never gave pain. He was as full of Christian charity as an egg is full of meat. From theology he had the same sort of aversion that he had from mathematics, with the added feeling that it lowered higher things.

The Preface of this book, enlarging the title, promises a Life of Charles and Mary Lamb. But indeed it is impossible to separate them. In the whole region of biography, there is no more beautiful example of sacrifice than Charles Lamb's devotion to his elder sister. Mary's mental derangement, which led her early in life to kill her own mother, would have ended in Bedlam, or worse, if Charles had not solemnly undertaken the care of her, and fulfilled it loyally until he died. She was never again violent; and, when she was herself, her literary gifts were only less remarkable than her brother's. But she was always liable to recurrent fits of insanity; and, when they occurred, he would take her quietly to her place of seclusion. He never made a grievance of it, or seemed to feel the burden. He never boasted of doing his duty. He did it as if it had been the most natural thing in the world, always disclaiming any sort of

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## *Stray Leaves*

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pretence, religious or moral. He could not remember life without Mary, who was by ten years his senior; and, though they agreed that she ought to die before him, she survived him for thirteen years.

Our earliest story of Lamb is connected with Mary. When she was taking him through a churchyard, he said: "Mary, where are the naughty people buried?" Here perhaps Mr. Lucas assumes too little intelligence on the part of his readers. For he tells them that the churchyard in question was "filled with testimonies to the virtues of the dead," and that the incident must have occurred after Lamb had learnt to read. From neither conclusion is it possible to dissent. But perhaps in an age of scant leisure there are some things which may be taken for granted. That Lamb would be happy at school, is perhaps another of them. Christ's Hospital was rough in his time; and the boys did not fare sumptuously every day, or any day. Lamb, however, managed to enjoy himself, as his own charming descriptions in *Elia* are quite enough to prove. Of his easy-going master he has left one of those perfect descriptions which no one else could write.

"Matthew Field belonged to that class of

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## Charles Lamb

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modest Divines who affect to mix in equal proportion the *gentleman*, the *scholar*, and the *Christian*; but, I know not how, the first ingredient is generally found to be the predominating dose in the composition." The type of clergyman thus depicted is, perhaps fortunately, obsolete; and Dr. Hawtrey of Eton was too accomplished a scholar to sit for the portrait. But in one respect there was a perfect sympathy between Field's pupil and himself. There never lived a truer gentleman than Charles Lamb; and the story of his proposal to Miss Kelly, the actress, all told in three letters, is one of the prettiest in the world. When Lamb contemplated matrimony, he never thought of leaving Mary, who had nothing to do with Miss Kelly's reason for refusing him. The only revenge he took on Miss Kelly was to write her a half-humourous letter, craftily designed to spare her pain; but he also paid her in public, as a dramatic critic, a compliment of which any woman might be proud. "She is in truth," he wrote for the *Examiner*, "not framed to tease or torment even in jest, but to utter a hearty '*Yes*' or '*No*'; to yield or refuse assent with a noble sincerity. We have not the pleasure of being acquainted with her;

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but we have been told that she carries the same cordial manners into private life."

Such manners as Lamb's are not to be learnt at Christ's Hospital, or any other school. Among his school-fellows the most famous is, of course, Coleridge. Equally congenial to Lamb, perhaps in some respects more congenial, was the witty Charles Valentine Le Grice, who, when asked to say grace, inquired whether there was not a clergyman present, and, being assured that there was not, ejaculated heartily: "Thank God." Le Grice might have remembered Benedick, for he became a clergyman himself. No one understood Lamb better, as his picture of his old friend's wit, quoted by Mr. Lucas, is sufficient to show. "It did not sharpen the arrows of satire, it did not grin with a provoking malice, it did not thirst for reward, it did not cater for vanity, it did not live on adulation. It was his own quiet possession and delight." Some of Lamb's puns, if regarded as made for display, are execrable. But they are made for amusement. Like their author, and Horace, *circum præcordia ludunt*. They appeal rather to the heart than to the head. Only a good man could have made them; they are so very bad.

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## *Charles Lamb*

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Mr. Lucas has, I think, told at length, for the first time, the awful tragedy of Lamb's life. Even at the distance of more than a century, it seems indecent to dwell on such a horror as involuntary matricide, or upon the haunting demon which always lurked behind the sweet reasonableness of Mary Lamb. It is the highest praise of Mr. Lucas to say, as can be said with truth, that he neither avoids the miserable subject nor says of it one jarring word. The event brought out the best side of Coleridge, whose private conduct and personal character were otherwise very different from Lamb's. At the end of a letter which Lamb justly called "an inestimable treasure," Coleridge wrote: "I charge you, my dearest friend, not to dare to encourage gloom or despair. You are a temporary sharer in human miseries, that you may be an eternal partaker of the Divine Nature. I charge you, if by any means it be possible, come to me." There and then Lamb, at the age of twenty-two, took upon himself the sole responsibility for his afflicted sister during the remainder of his life. He discharged it so long as he lived himself, not grudgingly or of necessity, but from the simple goodness of his heart. To be praised for it he would have regarded as an



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insult. Coleridge and Lamb, like Coleridge and most other people, afterwards quarrelled. The immediate occasion was a lofty remark of the philosophic poet: "Poor Lamb, if he wants any knowledge he may apply to me." Lamb did apply with a vengeance. He wanted to know whether the higher order of Seraphim Illuminati ever sneered, and whether the Vision Beatific were anything more or less than a perpetual representment to each individual Angel of his own present attainments and future capabilities, somehow after the manner of mortal looking-glasses, reflecting a perpetual complacency and self-satisfaction. This information Coleridge might, Lamb thought, obtain for him in Germany, whither he was going with the Wordsworths. After that incident, Coleridge was to Lamb an Archangel a little damaged; and his metaphysics were "only his fun." Yet there was no man on earth for whom Lamb had a higher admiration; and, during the last few months of his own life, he would repeat to himself, with a mournful cadence: "Coleridge is dead."

For Byron, except as a satirist, he never cared. Misanthropy was not in his line; and he used to say that the *Vision of Judgment* was the only good-natured thing the noble poet



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ever wrote. So far as Lamb had any politics, he was a Radical, and in sympathy with his friend Leigh Hunt, especially after Hunt had been imprisoned for libelling the Regent, as if anybody could. Shelley's poems he found "thin-sown with aught of profit or delight"; and he never really appreciated Keats. Wordsworth, though he once called him to his face, a "rascally old Lake Poet," he held in proper reverence; but his favourites were the Elizabethan poets, and Cowley, and Pope. When he said that he wrote for antiquity, he meant that he wrote for them.

Among his contemporaries, Lamb cherished George Dyer, whose name he has pickled and preserved in humour. "George," said he, "writes odes wherein the rhymes, like fashionable man and wife, keep a comfortable distance of six or eight lines apart, and calls that observing the laws of verse." Dyer was a perpetual dream of enjoyment to Lamb. "To G. D.," he told Wordsworth, of all people, "a poem is a poem. His own as good as anybody's, and (God bless him!) anybody's as good as his own; for I do not think he has the most distant guess of the possibility of one poem being better than another. The gods, by denying him the very faculty itself of dis-

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crimination, have effectually cut off every seed of envy in his bosom." Lamb clearly thought that the lack of envy was well worth the loss of discrimination; and indeed he was not always the most discriminating of critics himself. He did not care for the *Waverley Novels*, though we may well forgive him for a fault which, after all, was its own punishment, in consideration of his having persuaded Dyer that they were written by Lord Castlereagh. "There is nothing in my pages," he proudly apprised the "rascally old Lake Poet," "which a lady may not read aloud, without indecorum, *which is more than can be said of Shakespeare.*" "A line of Wordsworth's is a lever to lift the immortal spirit," he said in a more serious vein, though he did not hesitate to tax Wordsworth with stupidity for calling *Candide* dull. Perhaps Wordsworth desired to prevent the young from reading that work; and feared that to denounce it for immorality would have the opposite effect. Lamb could not let Wordsworth alone. Though as far as possible from sympathising with Jeffrey and the *Edinburgh Review*, the spirit of mischief in him was excited by the self-consciousness and self-complacency of the illustrious Excursionist. "Wordsworth, the great poet, is

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## *Charles Lamb*

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coming to town," he informed his friend Manning. "He is to have apartments in the Mansion House. He says he does not see much difficulty in writing like Shakespeare, if he had a mind to try it. It is clear that nothing is wanting but the mind." Lamb would never let anything stand in the way of his jest. But the "rascally old Lake Poet" had no more sympathetic reader.

Mr. Lucas is perhaps a little too careful in tracing, or attempting to trace, the connection of the Lambs with Lincolnshire. Dr. Johnson himself was not a more thoroughgoing, uncompromising Londoner, than Lamb. "Barry Cornwall tells us that, on being asked how he felt when amongst the lakes and mountains of Cumberland" (such a question would justify any answer), "Lamb replied, that he was obliged to think of the ham-and-beef shop near St. Martin's Lane, in order to bring his thoughts from their almost too painful elevation to the sober regions of everyday life." A familiar injunction in the Book of Proverbs might be held to account for this particular retort. But alas, "Leigh Hunt somewhere remarks that Lamb stopped him in the midst of a beautiful country lane to point out how inferior it was to Wardour

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Street." Lamb was no traveller, though he did once go to Paris, and profess to like frogs, which the Parisians, to his surprise, called "green eels." He did not object to the suburbs, because they were connected with the full tide of human existence at Charing Cross. But it is the Temple with which one associates him most; and in the late Master of the Temple, his best critic, his spirit seemed at times to move. They were both Shakespearean men. Nobody who heard Mr. Ainger read "Falstaff" can ever forget it; and one can almost hear him make the comment which Lamb made on Shakespeare's anachronistic mention of Aristotle in "Troilus and Cressida": "That's what Johnson referred to when he wrote—

'And panting Time toils after him in vain.'

Surely one of the happiest quotations ever made.

Judicious advantage has been taken in this book of Henry Crabb Robinson's Diary. Lamb, without meaning it, attached to him two literary lawyers. One was Talfourd, who became his biographer. The other was Crabb Robinson, who never forgot, so to speak, that he himself was on his oath. Such an entry as this owes nothing to adventitious arts.

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"May 15, 1814.—At the Colliers'. Lamb and his sister this evening expressed great kindness towards me, and it gave me great pleasure. They indeed belong to the very best order of persons. Their moral qualities are as distinguished as their intellectual."

If Charles and Mary had ever wanted a testimonial, Crabb Robinson would have written it for them while they were waiting. Talfourd had a different type of mind. He sums up the outer Lamb with the "quivering sweetness" of his face, in a single sentence. "Deep thought striving with humour, the lines of suffering wreathed in cordial mirth, and a smile of painful sweetness, present an image to the mind it can as little describe as note." Lamb, as is well known, did not keep silence on his own failings. The "Confessions of a Drunkard," though preposterously exaggerated as applied to himself, would hardly have been written by a water-drinker. Drunkenness did not tell much against a gentleman when the nineteenth century was young. But Lamb's excess was not so much convivial as consolatory. He smoked as well as drank, too much at times; and one day he wrote, with emphasis: "This very night I am going to *leave off tobacco!*" Then he added, with one of

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his inimitably characteristic touches: "Surely there must be some other world in which this unconquerable purpose shall be realised." "An unconquerable purpose" is an immortal phrase. Whether Lamb ever did leave off tobacco is doubtful. He certainly never left off gin; but on this subject I prefer the manly indignation of Mr. Birrell in "*Obiter Dicta*" to feeble and apologetic excuses.

"Be untruthful, unfaithful, unkind; darken the lives of all who have to live under your shadow, rob youth of joy, take peace from age, live unsought for, die unmourned, and, remaining sober, you will escape the curse of men's pity and be spoken of as a worthy person. But if ever, amidst what Burns called 'social noise,' you so far forget yourself as to get drunk, think not to plead a spotless life spent with those for whom you have laboured and saved; talk not of the love of friends or of help given to the needy; least of all make reference to a noble self-sacrifice passing the love of women. For all will avail you nothing. You get drunk—and the heartless, and the selfish, and the lewd, claim the privilege of pitying you, and receiving your name with an odious smile."

I can add nothing to that passionate protest,

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except that Lamb, often as he apologised for his faults, never claimed credit for any of his virtues. He rather tried to conceal them, except when the concealment would have done injury to others. He had a much keener sense than more orthodox persons possessed, of the harm done to religion by connecting it with unfairness or intolerance. Southey, like Johnson, was loth to admit that a freethinker could be a good man. "One of the most candid, most upright, and single-meaning men," Lamb wrote to him, "was the late Thomas Holcroft. I believe he never said one thing and meant another in his life; and, as near as I can guess, he never acted otherwise than with the most scrupulous attention to conscience. Ought we to wish the character false for the sake of a hollow compliment to Christianity?"

Lamb had the art, if art it be, of compressing into a single sentence whole volumes of sermons. But the great sermon was his life. His humour is irradiated with the sheer goodness which turned his duties into pleasures. He even fished George Dyer out of the water, though he never allowed him to forget that he had fallen into it. A better friend than Lamb it would be difficult to



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imagine. He could have cheered almost any sorrow, and lightened those he could not cheer. How the deaths of those he loved affected him, he has told, as only he could tell it, in a letter to Wordsworth. Wordsworth was always a tempting subject for fun. Few, indeed, are the fools who have not laughed at his poetry; and even Lamb, the exact opposite of a fool, could turn him into ridicule, when he himself was in the mood. But the real Wordsworth, the great immortal part of him, was as far beyond the reach of criticism as the depths of the Pacific are beyond the reach of a storm. Byron understood nothing in him that was worth understanding. Therefore he giped and sneered. Lamb wrote to him with the simple seriousness which is the unconscious tribute, not of admiration, but of reverence.

"Deaths upset one," he confided to Wordsworth, after the death of his own brother John, "and put one out, long after the recent grief. Two or three have died within this last twelve months; and so many parts of me have been numbed. One sees a picture, reads an anecdote, starts a casual fancy, and thinks to tell of it to this person in preference to every other—the person is gone whom it would have peculiarly suited.



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It won't do for *another*. Every departure destroys a class of sympathies. There's Captain Burney gone! What fun has whist now? What matters it what you lead, if you can no longer fancy him looking over you? One never hears anything, but the image of the particular person occurs with whom alone, almost, you would care to share the intelligence. Thus one distributes oneself about; and now, for so many parts of me, I have lost the market. Common natures do not suffice me. Good people, as they are called, won't serve. I want individuals. I am made up of queer points; and I want so many answering needles."

Wordsworth was different. His mind to him a kingdom was. In society he was nothing. When he withdrew into himself, the inspiration came; and he wrote like the Spirit of Nature, "whose dwelling is the light of setting suns." To the man of the world it was a stumbling-block. To the *Edinburgh Review* it was foolishness. But Lamb understood it very well.

To write of Lamb's humour is almost an impiety. One feels like a housemaid destroying cobwebs in dusting a room. Yet it had quite a common side. For Lamb was almost alone

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among really great humourists in loving, not only puns, but even practical jokes. His best, or worst pun, at least in these volumes, was suggested by Talfourd. Lamb said he would like to see the witnesses against Queen Caroline at supper. "You would not sit with them?" exclaimed the horrified lawyer. "Yes," said Lamb, "I would sit with anything but a hen or a tailor." This, however, was surpassed by Theodore Hook, when Lamb proposed that they should run round the garden at Colebrooke Cottage. "No," quoth Hook, "I can outrun no one, except the constable." Practical jokes belong, as a rule, to the class of crimes which exclude their perpetrators from decent society. But Lamb's genius came out, even in a quarter so unpromising as that. He had, as we all have sometimes, to meet a minor poet, whose verses he was invited previously to read. Like most imaginative persons, Lamb had a good memory, and, when the poetaster arrived, was prepared for him, even to the point of quotation. But he had also extemporised a little preface. "That reminds me," he would say, "of some verses I wrote when I was very young," and then would follow the other gentleman's lines. The victim was so meek, that Lamb went further, and

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claimed to have written the opening lines of *Paradise Lost*. This was more than the votary of the Muses could bear in silence. He had "allowed his own little verses to be taken without protest; but he could not endure to see Milton pillaged." Success could not have been more triumphant; and not the worst part of the story is, that the minor poet comes rather well out of it. The definition of a practical joke not having been authoritatively settled, one may be permitted to include in the category Lamb's solemn explanation: "I always call my sister 'Maria' when we are alone together, 'Mary' when we are with our friends, and 'Moll' before the servants." His remonstrance with the doctor who addressed some medicine to "Miss Isola Lamb" is certainly practical enough, and too delicious not to quote. "Emma Isola" was the name of the Italian girl, afterwards Mrs. Edward Moxon, whom Charles and Mary Lamb adopted.

"'No such person is known on the Chase Side,' wrote Lamb, who was then living at Enfield; 'and she is fearful of taking medicines which may have been made up for another patient. She begs me to say that she was born in *Isola* and christened *Emma*. Moreover, that she is Italian by birth, and that her ancestors

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were from Isola Bella ("Fair Island") in the kingdom of Naples. She has never changed her name, and rather mournfully adds that she has no prospect at present of doing so. She is literally I. SOLA, or single at present. Therefore she begs that the obnoxious monosyllable may be omitted on future phials—an innocent syllable enough, you'll say, but she has no claim to it. It is the bitterest pill of the seven you have sent her. When a lady loses her good *name*, what is to become of her? Well, she must swallow it as well as she can, but begs the dose may not be repeated.' "

In a still more fanciful mood, he wrote to his friend Bernard Barton, a banker's clerk, and a Quaker, on the day after the execution of Fauntleroy for forgery.

"You think it impossible that you could ever commit so heinous an offence. But so thought Fauntleroy once; so have thought many beside him, who at last have expiated as he has done. You are as yet upright. But you are a banker, at least the next thing to it. I feel the delicacy of the subject; but cash must pass through your hands, sometimes to a great amount. If, in an unguarded hour—but I will hope better. Consider the scandal it will bring upon those

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of your persuasion. Thousands would go to see a Quaker hanged, that would be indifferent to the fate of a Presbyterian or an Anabaptist. Think of the effect it would have on the sale of your poems alone, not to mention higher considerations."

The best of Lamb's humour is, of course, in "Elia," which, as he observed, is an anagram of "a lie." The literal truth rather bored him. He liked to get round it, and put it in another way. A "matter of fiction man," he once called himself; and fiction was to him more real than fact. Although he went regularly, if late, to the India House, he lived in literature, from Shakespeare to John Woolman, from the classics to the Lake poets. He has confessed his perplexity when a fellow-passenger on a coach asked him what he thought would be the value of the shops in Cheapside. "If," he says, pensively, "the man had asked me, what song the sirens sang, or by what name Achilles went when he hid himself among women, I might have hazarded a wide solution." But it is a far cry from the Symplegades to Cheapside. Christ's Hospital had not taught Lamb to dispense with translations. It was the "full proud sail" of Chapman's "great verse" that wafted him, as it wafted

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Keats, through Homer. But he wore the garb, if not the clothes, of the ancients.

Lamb had not much good to say of the India House during the thirty years of his bondage there. Yet in the ten years of his freedom, he often missed the old chains; and his essay on Superannuation is a sad one. Sad, indeed, at bottom, his whole life was, and sadder as he grew older. His sister, to whom he had sacrificed everything, slowly failed in mental power, and became less, rather than more, of a companion. His own writing, if possible, improved; but his fame was chiefly posthumous. While he lived, and long afterwards, it was confined to the initiated. It is now conterminous with English literature. Beyond that it is not likely to go. He disclaims writing for posterity; and posterity persists in reading him. He certainly never thought of writing for the foreigner; and to translate him adequately into any other tongue would require a genius not unlike his own. The end of his life, though sad, was very beautiful. "Her rambling chat is better to me," he wrote of Mary, "than the sense and sanity of this world." The perfect unselfishness of his devotion was, in the end, its own reward. Lamb had no more expectation than

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his contemporary Jane Austen of a permanent place among the British authors of the nineteenth century. Even now, those to whom a sense of humour has, by the inscrutable wisdom of Providence, been denied, look puzzled and uncomfortable when either name is mentioned. The two knew nothing of each other; and, except humour, they had nothing in common. The position of each is now unassailably secure. Miss Austen, a classic perfect in her kind, had no poetry in her. The poetic vein in Lamb was not less deep, nor less genuine, because it seldom found a metrical expression. "The Old Familiar Faces" is, of course, famous. A few sonnets are well known. Mr. Lucas has picked up some odds and ends. But it is by his unmetrical poetry, by his prose which never becomes prosaic, that Lamb lives. With sound judgment, Mr. Lucas quotes from "The Popular Fallacy: 'That we should rise with the Lark,'" a specimen of Lamb at his best. I will quote from the quotation:

"In this dearth of mundane satisfaction, we contract political alliances with shadows. It is good to have friends at Court. The abstracted media of dreams seem no ill introduction to that spiritual presence upon which, in no long

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time, we expect to be thrown. We are trying to know a little of the usages of that Colony, to learn the language and the phrases that we shall meet with there, that we may be the less awkward at our first coming among them. We willingly call a phantom a fellow, as knowing we shall soon be of their dark companionship. Therefore, we cherish dreams. We try to spell in them the alphabet of this invisible world; and think we know already how it shall be with us. Those uncouth shapes, which, while we clung to flesh and blood, affrighted us, have become familiar. We fall attenuated into their meagre essences, and have given the hand of half-way approval to incorporeal being. We once thought life to be something; but it has unaccountably fallen from us before its time. Therefore we choose to dally with visions. The sun has no purposes of ours to light us to. Why should we get up?"

Few passages in Lamb remind one more clearly of his master in style, Sir Thomas Browne; and yet few are more characteristic. Behind all Lamb's humour, except when he is forcing himself to be gay in self-defence, there is a back-ground of melancholy. The "doubtful doom of human kind" haunted



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him, as it haunted Virgil, despite intervening centuries and revolutions of faith. He was not of the earth earthy. The "spiritual presence" of which he speaks, he had already in some degree realised. He was far more delivered from the burden of the flesh than the mystic Coleridge. It is the airy, fantastic, element in him, which makes the process of tracking him from Edmonton to Enfield just a little ridiculous. Nobody could have done the thing better than Mr. Lucas, with more thoroughness, or with less egoism. It is all right, I suppose. Every fact connected with Lamb is brought together in these volumes. But how Lamb did hate facts! There is a Concordance to Shelley; and yet Cruden sleeps in his grave. Shelley, too, and Lamb, are undisturbed by the attentions of their votaries. Even Dr. Parr, a Whig of the Whigs, a man fanatical in his Whig principles, cannot avenge himself upon Mr. Lucas for making him a "sturdy old Tory." This is the only mistake I have observed in Mr. Lucas's book; and I mention it as the exception which proves the rule, a tribute to his general accuracy. His work is final. He has written the full, entire, and comprehensive *Life* of Lamb. The tautology is my own.

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The tribute to Lamb is magnificent. If some of Elia's lovers have a lurking or sneaking sense of incongruity about these methodical annals of an unmethodical life, and think how Lamb would have l-l-l-laughed at the idea, they must also feel that, when every extra glass has been set down on the wrong side of Lamb's account, the balance on the right side is beyond human calculation.

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## *The Author of "Ionica"*<sup>1</sup>

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THE collection of poems known as "Ionica" is familiar to all students of English literature. Many of them were published nearly half a century ago, and have long been favourites with a small circle of scholarly folk. Upon the general reader, they have never taken much hold. For, with all their beauty and charm, they are rather artificial and academic copies of verses than the spontaneous expression of natural genius. One of the best among them, perhaps the best of all, "Heraclitus," is translated from the Greek Anthology, though printed here as an original poem. "Phædra's Muse" is a translation from Euripides, and "Barine" a translation from Peel's favourite Ode of Horace, though this little volume gives no hint of either fact. "Mimnermus in Church," a lovely lyric, is Greek in everything except the language. "After Reading 'Ajax'" might be set in an examination paper for candidates to explain the allusions. The

<sup>1</sup> "Ionica." By William Cory; with Biographical Introduction and Notes by Arthur C. Benson, Fellow of Magdalene College, Cambridge. London: George Allen, 1905.

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jolly "Ballad for a Boy" is one of the few really original pieces, though "Amaturus" was written in ignorance of Crashaw. If William Johnson, who afterwards changed his name to Cory, had been only the author of "Ionica," a new edition of his poetry would hardly deserve particular notice. For while its peculiar taste and flavour are so well known that they need no recommendation, as good wine needs no bush, it is vain to expect that this little book will ever be popular, in the largest sense of that term. But Johnson was for twenty-seven years a master at Eton; and, during the whole of that time, he exercised a peculiar influence upon his pupils, many of whom are distinguished men, one of whom has been Prime Minister of England. As a teacher, he was in a class by himself, differing, not in degree but in kind, from all the other teachers I, at least, have ever known. At Eton, as most people know, the important thing is the tutorial system; a boy depends more upon his tutor than upon the Head Master and all the other masters put together. Yet I have heard many Eton men, who were not Johnson's pupils, say that they took no interest in school or pupil room, and nobody seemed to take any interest in them, until they were in Johnson's

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division. Then for the first time they felt the contact of a mind which understood their own. Even in boys who seemed to other masters hopelessly stupid, Johnson would discover a bright side which responded to sympathetic treatment. Such a man cannot be at the greatest school in England for a quarter of a century without producing some effect upon the life of the nation. Johnson wrote very little for the public. His "Guide to Modern English History" was a financial failure; and he never completed it. It covers the first twenty years of the Peace, from 1815 to 1835. The title was unfortunate, suggesting a manual of facts and dates. It is brilliantly epigrammatic in style, if rather paradoxical in judgment; and some of the best critics regard it as unrivalled for luminous appreciation of character. But it did not get beyond a narrow group, chiefly, if not solely, composed of the author's personal friends. It was caviare to the general.

"No one," says Mr. Arthur Benson, "who knew William Cory, will think it an exaggeration to say that his mind was probably one of the most vigorous and commanding minds of the century." I should be rather inclined to say, that no one who knew William Cory

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would have written that sentence. It is not an exaggeration, because an exaggeration is an overstatement of a fact. It is altogether wide of the mark. I think I must have known William Cory. I was his pupil for six years. After he left Eton, I stayed with him at his house in Devonshire. During the last years of his life, which he spent at Hampstead, I was his constant visitor and guest. The most vigorous and commanding minds of the century are those which have had most effect upon public opinion. Cory's had none at all. When he attempted to address the public, nothing came of it; they did not understand him, nor he them. When he tried to defend Eton against the attacks of a popular writer, Matthew Higgins, who called himself "Jacob Omnium," he failed altogether. He was great simply as a teacher. My intellectual debt to him is such that I may be prejudiced; but I cannot imagine that in that character he was ever surpassed.

He was a Devonshire man, born at Torrington, and his father had close relations of friendship, as well as of business, with the landed gentry. The results of this early training were never effaced. All his years at Eton could not remove from William Johnson's mind the

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delusion that there is in this country a caste called the aristocracy, with virtues and vices, especially virtues, of its own. He went to Eton as a Collegier, and won the Newcastle. He went to Cambridge, or rather to King's, and won the Craven. He became, in the ordinary course, a Fellow of King's, and returned to Eton as a Master at the age of twenty-three. He was the first, I think, to break through the tradition by which the entire staff took Holy Orders. Although his health was good, and his physical strength considerable, his extreme shortness of sight disqualified him for athletic exercises; and he led the life of a book-worm, though by nature peculiarly sensitive to beauty, refinement, and grace. At that time, and within the memory of men now living, every Eton Master had been a Collegier; and almost all of them were Kingsmen. Their training had been extremely narrow; and their experience was as narrow as their training.

Mr. Benson says that my tutor, as I must be allowed to call him, "became a first rate classical scholar." This reminds me of the late Lord Crewe asking Mrs. Gladstone whether her husband did not take a considerable interest in politics. The late Professor Munro, "Lucre-

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tius Munro," said that William Johnson had written the best Latin lyrics since the death of Horace. His scholarship was so far beyond my power of appreciation that I hesitate to describe it. When he was explaining a classical author, it was hard to believe that he had not written the book himself. For he seemed to know what was in the mind of Sophocles, or of Virgil, and why they had used particular phrases, not merely what the phrases meant. He seldom employed commentaries, or referred to them. Thompson's "Phædrus" was one of the few exceptions. The bits of translation from Plato in Thompson's notes he was never tired of praising. Of "cribs" he had a horror; and the sight of a Bohn produced a violent convulsion of pupil room. Even an English-Latin dictionary was taboo. "Always use the Latin-English, never the English-Latin," was a favourite maxim of his. When the son of a celebrated statesman rendered "naval victory" by *umbilica victoria*, he at once said, probably with truth: "That comes of using the English-Latin." His own translations were perfect. Stock phrases always irritated him. "Don't translate γὰρ 'for,'" he would shout; and indeed that is the weakest point



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in the Authorised Version of the New Testament; γὰρ is often no more to be translated than a comma. ὡν δὲ "but as it is," I seem to hear now, and "*ille*, the former," "*hic*, the latter," will remain with me to my dying day. When the Romans meant that an athlete was as strong as a lion, they said that he was stronger; and, in reading Cicero's "Letters," it is useful to remember that a thousand *sestertii* make one *sestertium*, worth about eight pounds—not a coin, but a sum. These are small points; and I only use them to illustrate my tutor's familiarity with those old Greeks and Romans who, to many learned persons, seem insoluble mysteries. He boasted, though by no means given to boasting, that, blind as he was, he found his way about Rome without a guide, simply from his knowledge of Horace and Ovid, of Tacitus and Juvenal. After quoting Munro, it is perhaps absurd to express any opinion of my own. But it seems to me that my tutor wrote better in Greek than in English, and that his Greek elegiacs in "*Arundines Cami*" (a book, by the way, of which he had a very poor opinion) are at least equal to anything in "*Ionica*." I refer to his translations of the canto from "*In Memoriam*" beginning: "He passed, a

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## *Stray Leaves*

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soul of nobler tone," and of Matthew Arnold's song: "Strew on her roses, roses." The Latin lyrics which excited Munro's enthusiastic admiration are contained in the key to a little schoolbook called "Lucretilis." Cory was a severe critic of Latin verse; but his power of improving a boy's exercise in that line by a touch here, and a touch there, would be incredible to anybody who had not seen it done. If he had edited a classical author, the edition would have been a masterpiece. He never wasted time on easy passages. He never left a difficulty unexplained. I doubt whether emendations of the text interested him much. He wanted to get at the real meaning. The pedantry of scholarship he loathed. The author with whom he had most affinity was Plato; and he taught some of the Dialogues as a special subject; not in pupil room but in school. There was a good deal of resemblance, more than appeared at first sight, between him and Socrates. He certainly had the maieutic faculty, the gift of bringing other people's ideas to the birth. His teaching was the exact negation of cramming. Unless you could put an idea in your own words, if you could only repeat the official version of it, he did not consider that you

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knew it at all. There were ways of getting round my tutor with which no mental process had anything to do. But, intellectually, I do not think that he was ever deceived. Few men talked less about themselves; and to his poetry, with one exception, I never heard him make the most distant allusion. He always maintained that he ought not to have won the Chancellor's English Medal at Cambridge for a poem on Plato. The prize should have gone, he said, to Henry Maine, whose beautiful verses he kept, and was fond of lending. Of Cambridge in those days when Leslie Ellis was a star, and George Denman persuaded the Examiners that he was a better scholar than Munro, there exists a singularly faithful memorial called "Five Years at an English University," by an American writer named Bristed, who, by almost incredible exertions, obtained a second class. Bristed thought that he could say anything he liked about anybody if only he altered the name; and his book is, in consequence, diverting. But perhaps the funniest things in it are his own longs and shorts. I still bless the day when I found it on my tutor's shelves with all the right names supplied.

Johnson had, says Mr. Benson, a wide know-

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ledge of history, of politics, both home and foreign, of political economy, of moral science. His knowledge of moral science he kept, so far as his pupils were concerned, to himself. Political economy he taught, like everything he taught at all, incomparably well. When I tell people that I became a Free Trader at Eton, they think me a liar or a prig. But it is the simple fact. My tutor was a student of Ricardo and Bastiat. He was fond of French, which he had taught to himself, and frequently declared that it was the best language for all kinds of science. In his evidence before the Public Schools' Commission, Lord Clarendon's Commission in 1862, he proposed that French themes on modern subjects should be set in place of Latin, which had not the proper words. I doubt whether his general knowledge of history was very great. On legal and constitutional questions, he was certainly not to be trusted. In naval and military history he was infallible. I really believe that he knew the career of every regiment in the British Army, and every ship in Her Majesty's Service. A regiment marching down town from Windsor always brought him to the door. He loved to talk of martial exploits, and wrote rather morbidly

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of the "vile eyes that had made him a muff." I have seen him called a "Jingo." No description could be more absurd. Jingo is a cant term invented for the supporters of Lord Beaconsfield's foreign policy in 1878. To that policy Johnson was resolutely opposed. He hated the Turk. He had no love for Disraeli, "one who had nothing to do with useful legislation, except to cavil at it." He attacked Sir Henry Elliot, whose son had been one of his favourite pupils, in the Devonshire Press. He was as little of a Jingo as Mr. Gladstone himself. On the other hand, he was never a Gladstonian. Gladstone's High Churchmanship, like Lord Salisbury's, excited his suspicion and distrust. For, though he seems to have leaned himself to that school of thought when he was very young, all trace of it had disappeared before I knew him, and he had become a rationalising Erastian Whig. He speaks contemptuously in his *History of men old in years, or old before their time in thought*, who had a fumbling dread of the human reason. The Whigs, perhaps not the real Whigs, but the Whigs of his historical imagination, were philosophers, governed by pure intellect. He gloried in the name, and justly denounced as vulgar the pretence that

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only a few families had a right to be Whigs. At the same time, he almost worshipped Sir Robert Peel, claiming that he could appreciate Peel without depreciating Melbourne. Lord Melbourne never had a warmer admirer than Johnson, who regarded him as an embodiment of the golden mean between the Toryism he despised, and the Radicalism he dreaded. But perhaps Sydney Smith's Preface to his own *Collected Essays* gave him more satisfaction than any other political writing, disrespectful to Melbourne as it is. For Macaulay, especially the speeches, he expressed an almost unbounded admiration. Gibbon, he had the temerity to assert, should be re-written. He could not get over the Gallicisms or the artificial elaboration of the style.

Outside the literature of Greece and Rome, Johnson's taste was not sure. Shelley was antipathetic to him. He never appreciated Thackeray or Carlyle. He amused himself with the paradox that Shakespeare was a bad play-wright, inferior to Sardou. His ideal dramatist in modern times was Victor Hugo. He never tried to force his literary taste on anybody. That was not his way. I remember once making to him a foolish, flippant remark about Wordsworth, whom I was pleased to

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## *The Author of "Ionica"*

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credit with fine passages. "You'll read him through some day," was his only answer. I had left school before I took the implied advice; but I have never ceased to be thankful for it, and never shall. A long lecture on the importance of a study of Wordsworth as a whole would not have produced the same result. That was the secret of his influence. He dropped the hint, and left it to work.

Mr. Benson, who is useful in keeping one more or less to the point, says that my tutor "had a thorough acquaintance with and a deep love of literature, and all this (?) in spite of the fact that he lived a very laborious and wearing life as a school-teacher with impossibly large classes, and devoted himself with whole-hearted enthusiasm to his profession." I do not think that he was in the least enthusiastic about his profession. He was certainly fond of depreciating it, and contrasting it with more active forms of life. He was enthusiastic about particular boys, not always the best; and he liked to think that he was training statesmen. The gerund-grinding part of the business bored him. But he was such a consummate scholar, that it gave him no trouble; and nothing that he taught could ever for a moment, while he taught it, be dull. He

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never seemed as if he tried to be interesting, but as if he could not be anything else. In scholarship he began where some of his colleagues left off; and I have wondered at times whether he thought in Greek. That he was teaching "dead languages" never occurred either to him or to his pupils. It was the living voice that came to us. He talked of Virgil as he talked of Wordsworth, and, as "An Invocation" shows, Theocritus was equally familiar to him with Tennyson. Of "impossibly large classes" I know nothing. I suppose Mr. Benson means classes so large that it would be impossible to teach them. Johnson's division in my time was of the same size as other people's, about thirty-five; the discipline was perfect. We behaved far better in that room, now part of the school library, than we behaved in Chapel. If Johnson could not see he could hear; and the faintest sound reached him. He very seldom complained of a boy, which meant a flogging from the Head Master. But he had a tongue that cut like a razor; and he was quite merciless in the use of it. Mr. Benson speaks of his "courtesy"; and in later life, after his marriage, he was invariably courteous. But then he was in many respects a different man, and



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much more like other people. I have only space to describe him as he was at Eton. There he became notorious for his rudeness, being extremely shy, extremely irritable, and versed in the vocabulary of contempt. In teaching he never aimed at effect. "We are not learned enough to show off," he said sharply to Halford Vaughan, when that eccentric scholar examined him before the Commission. No human being I have ever known was more free from vanity. He had extraordinary terseness of expression, and never wasted a word. His comments upon a difficult passage, or a passage which would have been difficult to others, seemed to come of themselves in the form most easily remembered; his translation was always idiomatic and pointed. "Thorough acquaintance with literature" does not describe him to me in the least. He was anything but an omnivorous reader; for his taste in modern literature was capricious. I have already mentioned his dislike of Shelley, Carlyle, and Thackeray. He could not read Jane Austen, confounding form with substance, and calling her trivial. He did not care for Dickens. I do not know whether he often read Shakespeare. Charlotte Brontë and George Eliot, a strange pair,

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he exalted above all other novelists, except Walter Scott. He was a devout Tennysonian, and a fervent admirer of Mr. Swinburne's "Atalanta in Calydon"; Matthew Arnold's poems he never tired of, nor of contrasting them favourably with his prose. Browning he could not or would not read. Only a few stanzas of "The Last Ride" appealed to him at all. A less catholic appreciation it would be hard to find.

One of my tutor's methods as a teacher, perhaps the most characteristic of them all, was to rouse a boy's combative instincts by flouting his prejudices, questioning his beliefs, treading, so to speak, on his corns. Suddenly put on the defensive, the dullest fellow, if he had any spirit in him, would try to say something for himself. If he talked nonsense, no pity was shown him. But if he made any sort of case, he received an encouragement which was peculiarly flattering, because it had the appearance of a reluctant concession. The one thing impossible in that pupil room was intellectual torpor. Acquiescence would not do. You were allowed to disagree if you had a reason. Without one it was not enough to agree. Mr. Benson says, quite truly, that in general conversation Johnson disliked argu-

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ment. One of the few practical precepts for conduct in life that I can remember to have heard from him was, that if you did not know the opinions of your company, you should "confine yourself to facts." But he encouraged boys to dispute his statements, because he thereby discovered whether they understood what he was saying. He became more, not less, didactic in the company of adults; and it was in general society, not in pupil room, that he appeared to be a pedagogue. Mr. Benson justly praises his "Essay on the Education of the Reasoning Faculties" in Dr. Farrar's book, perhaps the most characteristic thing he ever wrote, though it ought to be read along with his evidence before the Royal Commission, and his "Hints to Eton Masters." He had a profound contempt for the purely grammatical teaching of the classics, "pottering," for instance, over the "little ingenuities" of Ovid. Although he made no real attempt to explain the metaphysics of Plato, and had no great knowledge of metaphysics himself, it was not merely as a supreme master of style that he loved and held up to us the author of the "Theætetus" and the "Gorgias." It was the moral and political doctrines that attracted him, and that

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he brought out. Grammar was necessary, because without it the books were unintelligible. When once it had been mastered, there was no need to think anything more about it. Plato was a philosopher, not a maker of sentences. What was the use of reading Thucydides, if he threw no light on the problems of modern state-craft? Niebuhr and Grote were favourites with him, because they used their knowledge of the past to explain the present, making scholarship a mean, not an end in itself. That, however, is a common view enough. Johnson's peculiar gift was to make scenes and persons and episodes in the classics so intensely vivid, that all difference between ancient and modern faded away.

What Mr. Benson means by saying that Johnson "had strong common sense and much practical judgment," I cannot imagine. He was morbidly, sometimes painfully, eccentric; and he knew nothing of the world. He stayed in a few country houses, where he idealised everything he saw. Shyness and blindness (he used to say that he had never seen a bird fly) made him quite unsociable. He would not mix. As a talker, chiefly in monologue, with a few boys or intimate friends, there was scarcely any one like him for pouring out

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knowledge, humour, even eloquence. He enjoyed hearing about public affairs from any one who had ever been concerned in them; and he remembered what he was told. He wrote the best possible letters, especially about his pupils, original and penetrating; for he had some insight into the characters of boys, though he was at the mercy of superficial graces. His genius was for the education of the reasoning faculties; and it sometimes almost amounted to creating them. His chief fault as a teacher was favouritism, which he indulged to excess, so that it finally destroyed his moral influence altogether. But he never allowed it to interfere with his duty to others. I was not the sort of boy he liked; for in those days he detested the commonplace. But he knew that it was important for me to get a scholarship at the university; and he gave me just twice the amount of time that I had a right to expect. When the desired result was achieved, he said: "Well, you've satisfied the examiners." I replied: "I suppose so, sir;" and the subject dropped. Somehow I preferred his remark to the most elaborate eulogy. His horror of gush was contagious.

My tutor's political opinions were, throughout his later life, perfectly consistent. He

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always asked himself what the Whigs would have thought or done. Even for Chancellor of the Exchequer he preferred Cornewall Lewis to Gladstone; and the late Lord Halifax was to him an object of reverence, as embodying the good old Whig tradition. Though he was tutor to most of Mr. Gladstone's sons, he did not like the great man personally, nor trust him politically. "Oxford tutor *plus* Liverpool bagman," he used to call him. I always thought it a magnificent compliment; but he did not mean it as such. He meant a mixture of Jesuitical subtlety and mercantile prudence. Lord Salisbury's "Italian in the custody of a Scotsman" is a more complimentary form of the same idea. My tutor sometimes had strange delusions; and I believe he really imagined that Mr. Gladstone wanted to see whether he was getting value for his money when he came down to talk about his own sons. Yet he would often speak of the same many-sided person's "dignity and high courtesy" as—examiner for the Newcastle Scholarship. He always voted Liberal till 1886, after which it was hardly safe to speak to him about Gladstone, the Liberal Party, or Home Rule. In one respect he did not resemble those "high statesmen," his favourite

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Whigs. He never saw two sides to a question about which he really cared. He would have been happier if John Bright, the Radical bogey of his youth, had not been a Unionist. But one cannot have everything in this imperfect world. Lord Hartington had to represent the "high statesmanship" and all the rest of it.

I have often been amused at the zeal on behalf of "denominational education" professed for political purposes by men who send their sons to public schools. When I went to Eton, there were numerous services in Chapel at which attendance was compulsory. Some, those on surplice days, to which the choir of St. George's, Windsor, came, were extremely beautiful. Others merely saved the Head Master the trouble of calling "absence"; and there was a "conduct," or chaplain, whose lungs, and legs, were such, that, if the lessons were short, he could be in a fives'-court at a quarter past three, after saying: "When the wicked man" at three o'clock precisely. The other recognitions of the Christian faith, about which the Fellows, mostly inaudible, were understood to preach on Sunday, were a lesson in the Greek Testament on Monday morning, "Sunday questions" answered from books of reference, and "Sunday private" with one's tutor. John-

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son did not try to inculcate theology. I never heard him express belief or disbelief in any theological proposition whatsoever. But he had a very serious, reverent mind; he abominated flippancy; and one carried away from his Sunday privates, colloquial as they were, the conviction that it is impossible to divide the sacred from the secular, not because everything is secular, but because everything is sacred. He was a perfect reader; he read without the huge gold spectacles which disfigured him; and one of his favourite passages in Ruskin, always taken from "Modern Painters," or "The Stones of Venice," was far more impressive than most of the sermons in Chapel. The only Biblical commentary I ever heard him recommend was Archbishop Leighton on St. Peter, a purely spiritual and devotional work. Though a regular church-goer, he was, as Lord Selborne said of the Duke of Devonshire, "not ecclesiastically minded." The clergy, he would grumble, got all the good things both in this world and in the next. His pet quotation from Bishop Butler, "Everything is itself, and not another thing," would, in his opinion, prevent most sermons from being preached. The curious, now obsolete rule, which excluded even clerical masters



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from the pulpit, he defended before the Commissioners, on the ground that boys did not like being preached at. They liked to be "preached to as ordinary Christians."

I have wandered from "Ionica"; and yet I feel that I have not done justice to the most remarkable man I ever knew or am likely to know. We are all made for some purpose, though it may not be in every case easy to see what that purpose is. William Johnson came into the world to train the reasoning faculties of boys, not to increase the number of minor poets by one. To extract an estimate of him from his poetry is impossible. Mr. Benson has done his best; and he no doubt derived assistance from other sources. A few characteristic sayings he has correctly transcribed; and he has written an interesting, ingenious little essay, on a character evolved from his own mind. But he has for once, through no fault of his own, missed the mark. He had not the material. Johnson once listened, with great expectations, to talk about himself in an inn parlour. All he could hear was, that he was like a man who once lived at Leamington. He thought it dull. Mr. Benson is never dull; but, in this single instance, he has failed to grasp the right

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end of the stick. My tutor was a teacher, and nothing but a teacher. He did not teach on any system. He taught because he could not help it. If you took a walk with him, or steered him on the river, you learned more than if you had been in school "up to" anybody else. It was all intellectual, got from books. About the affairs of life, a monk in a cloister could have told you as much; and a girl at Newnham could tell you a great deal more. But then nobody read books quite as he did. If they were the kind of books which suited him, they gained in richness and in form by passing through his mind. His verbal memory was not remarkable; and he seldom quoted. His memory for facts was prodigious. I doubt whether a question could have been asked him out of James's "Naval History" which he would not have answered. I have been told, and I can well believe, that when Lord Roberts was commanding the Indian army he consulted my tutor by letter about the details of past events on the north-west frontier. Mr. Benson's best anecdote describes how Johnson "went down to Portsmouth to see a friend who was in command of a man-of-war; he was rowed about among the hulks; the sailors in the gig looked half contemptu-

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ously at the sturdy landsman, huddled in a cloak, hunched upon the stern-sheets, peering about through his spectacles. But contempt became first astonishment, and then bewildered admiration, when they found that he knew the position of every ship, and the engagements in which each had fought." Political history, though he knew it far less well, was almost equally interesting to him; and he always referred with veneration to the authority of his friend the present Master of Trinity, as one whose store of anecdotes was equally accurate and large. In encyclopædic learning, he would not have dreamt of competition with his colleague at Eton, William Wayte. He was not, in the general sense, a learned man at all; and yet it was impossible to be in his company without learning. He might have compared himself, as Socrates did, with the torpedo fish, that gave electric shocks. He had the art of under-statement, and the brevity, sometimes the incompleteness, of his sentences fixed them on the mind. Not that he had swallowed all formulas. Every visitor to his pupil room, from the Provost to the lowest of the lower boys, including the most distinguished strangers, male or female, was greeted with the words: "Wipe your shoes."

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Another formula, which had small influence, was: "Don't talk about the weather." To begin a conversation with him was not easy; and he would seldom begin one himself. Once started, he would talk by the hour. He would listen most patiently to practical men on practical things. What never failed to bore him was talk for talking's sake. For the inanities of conventional existence, he felt as fierce a scorn as Byron himself; and parents who came to see him were soon made to feel that they were not wanted, unless they had something very special to say. "People are so fond of railway journeys," he used pathetically to complain; and no doubt there is a type of mind that likes Bradshaw.

Mr. Benson says, doubtless on authority, that in 1860 Lord Palmerston was for appointing William Johnson to the Chair of Modern History at Cambridge. He would have been a far better professor than Charles Kingsley, who owed his selection, Mr. Benson assures us, to the Prince Consort. Once at least he gave a formal lecture at Eton, not written but spoken; and most delightful it was. When he stepped forward to begin, the boys cheered him. "Stop that rubbishing row," he exclaimed roughly, and plunged into his subject.

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The expression was more forcible than elegant ; but the boys liked him none the less for that. They knew that he was honourable and kind-hearted. The private wounds inflicted by his tongue, he probably did not realise. He could no more conceal his likes and dislikes than a dog or a child. He might with practice have become a very powerful speaker ; for he had a great command of colloquial English, and the oratorical instinct for dramatic surprises. His course of lessons in Political Economy, denounced in those days by Carlyle as the dismal science and apotheosis of selfishness, concluded with the words : " Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ." Then, as if afraid that he had been led into sentiment, he jerked out : " I have nothing more to say." What more could be said ? A great deal more could be said about him ; but I must stop. Garrulity is stealing upon me ; and garrulity was a thing he abhorred. Early in life he wrote his own epitaph, and with it I will conclude this sketch :

" And when I may no longer live,  
They'll say, who know the truth,  
He gave whate'er he had to give,  
To freedom and to youth."

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*Lord Randolph Churchill.*<sup>1</sup>

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**M**R. WINSTON CHURCHILL has all the requisites of a filial biographer, except filial reverence. He writes of his father as he would write of any other public man whom he sincerely admired. But this is probably the new style, and will meet with general approbation. Lord Stanmore, who observes that "censure or commendation of a father by a son alike tremble on the verge of disrespect," and Sir Spencer Walpole, who says much the same thing in different language, belong to an older school, which, for want of a better name, may be called the School of the Fifth Commandment. Mr. Churchill, however, is quite unconscious of the defect he has inherited. He is as proud of his parentage as any son can be. The people of whom Matthew Arnold said that they spoke of God as if He were a man in the next street, were sincerely religious after their fashion. I cannot think that a Life of a father by a son is appropriately illustrated by caricatures from

<sup>1</sup> "Lord Randolph Churchill." By Winston Spencer Churchill, M.P. London: Macmillan & Co., 1906 (2 vols.).

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## Lord Randolph Churchill

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*Punch*, even though that true gentleman and splendid draughtsman, Sir John Tenniel, be the caricaturist. But *de gustibus non est disputandum*.

In every other respect this is an excellent, almost a great book. The only dull chapter is frankly headed "The Party Machine," so that any one may skip it; and to make that sort of machinery interesting would require the pen of Voltaire. It is perhaps a superfluous caution to warn off those who take no interest in politics. As a politician, Lord Randolph Churchill was one of the most attractive, powerful, and entertaining characters in the Parliamentary drama of England. From any other point of view he does not deserve fifty pages, and hardly gets as many. With the instinct of a true artist, Mr. Churchill saw this point at once; and he wastes no time in coming to it. After that, the difficulty is not to get on with the book, but to put it down for meals, exercise, or sleep.

Lord Randolph Churchill called himself a Tory Democrat. The best account of this curious species that I know may be found in "Waterdale Neighbours," which was written by my old friend, Mr. Justin McCarthy, before any one had heard of Lord Randolph. Disraeli

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was its real originator, and "Coningsby" is its classic. It was inspired in part by a hatred of Whiggery, the government of the people by the people for the benefit of Whigs, and in part by a far-sighted perception that the working classes had the promise of the future. The Reform Act of 1832, the crowning triumph of Whig principles, did nothing for workmen. The Factory Acts, framed and passed on their behalf, were chiefly due to Lord Shaftesbury, who was anything but a Whig. Cobden and Gladstone had no sympathy with these Acts. They were strongly opposed by Peel and Bright. The Reform Act of 1867, which enfranchised working men in boroughs, though really a Liberal measure, was actually carried through both Houses by Derby and Disraeli. The Education Act of 1870, a thoroughly democratic statute, met with more resistance from Radical Dissenters than from Tory Churchmen. The Charter of Trade Unionism, the Employers and Workmen Act of 1875, was granted by a Tory Government. Such, in brief outline, was the Tory Democrat's case. The very next year, the third of Disraeli's second and only real Administration, he and his colleagues became involved in Eastern affairs; and social reform went to the wall.



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## *Lord Randolph Churchill*

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Lord Randolph, who had been elected in 1874 for the family borough of Woodstock, had no philo-Turkish propensities of any kind. On the contrary, his sympathies were with the suffering victims of the Porte. Even at the beginning of 1878, when the Jingo fever was raging, and Gladstone was hardly safe in the streets of London, this young Tory, then in his thirtieth year, wrote to Sir Charles Dilke from Dublin Castle, where he was acting as private secretary to his father, the Duke of Marlborough:—

“The Government have too great an advantage; but I think if we are led into taking any decisive steps hostile to Russia, a great effort should be made for an authoritative declaration that the ultimate aim and object of any move on our part is the complete freedom and independence of the Slav nationality, as opposed to any reconstruction of the Turkish Empire.”

Nothing came of this bold and independent line. From his own side of the House, Lord Randolph could not expect, and did not receive, any support. Except Mr. Walpole, they were Turks almost to a man. Lord Beaconsfield had his way; and his followers voted Mr. Gladstone down, until, in 1880, the flood came

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and destroyed them all. Yet, even at the Congress of Berlin, Gladstone's policy prevailed; and his Bulgarian pamphlet, scouted in the drawing-rooms of London, received the diplomatic sanction of the Great Powers. Mr. Churchill's generous tribute to that illustrious man, whose true stature will be realised when he stands alone, is worth quoting:—

“So long as his light lasted, the House of Commons lived, and, amid the fiercest passions, and even scenes of violence, preserved its hold upon the sympathies and the imagination of the whole world; and at his death it sank at once, perhaps for ever, in public esteem.”

Nevertheless, it was ostensibly against Gladstone that the Fourth Party directed its attacks, even when the real object of them was Sir Stafford Northcote, whom Mr. Churchill systematically under-rates. Sir Stafford was not a good Party man. He was a Liberal Conservative; and sometimes the Liberalism preponderated. But the quickness of his intellect, the sureness of his memory, and his thorough knowledge of public business, would have made him an excellent Leader if his authority had been loyally supported, and not secretly undermined. The Fourth Party made the House of Commons a more amusing place

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than it would have been without them. If any other justification for their conduct can be produced, Mr. Churchill has not been successful in finding it. Their behaviour in the case of Mr. Bradlaugh was a far more scandalous outrage to everything which deserves the name of religion, than Bradlaugh's pocket testament and private oath.

Although Lord Randolph Churchill was often purely factious in his conduct (if faction can be pure), he usually thought for himself. His quick, independent, versatile mind was never satisfied with phrases, or catchwords; and with the rows of Tories behind him he had no more real sympathy than if they had been, as in some respects they were, identical with the benches on which they sat. When, in the last days of the eventful year 1880, the Boers of the Transvaal rose in revolt, and took up arms for their independence, Lord Randolph wrote to Sir Drummond Wolff, with a wisdom beyond his years:—

“I attach the greatest importance to this news from South Africa, and am of opinion that the question of reducing the Boers will divide the Liberal Party by a sharper and more insuperable line than any Irish question. The arguments that formerly were of force

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for the annexation of the Transvaal can no longer be used with effect. The Zulus are broken, and Secocoeni and his tribe gone, and there is no danger of a native irruption into Natal. The Boers, on the other hand, cannot be said to have ever ceased to be an independent nationality, and are showing now their perfect fitness to take care of themselves."

Mr. Churchill calls this a "curious letter." I should call it one of the most long-sighted and sagacious that were ever written by a young man. Each sentence hits the mark with unerring aim. The Liberal Party were divided. The first division was in the Cabinet, where Lord Kimberley and most of his colleagues fought hard for keeping the Transvaal, against Mr. Bright and Mr. Chamberlain. When the Radical section carried the Prime Minister with them, and prevailed, the question became a Party one. But, ten years afterwards, when Lord Randolph visited the Cape himself, he expressed regret for the line he had taken after Majuba, and complete agreement with the policy of restoration. The great cleavage of the Liberal Party, however, came after his death. The cause of it was the Boer war of 1899; and it was at least

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## *Lord Randolph Churchill*

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as deep as the schism of Home Rule. It was not less bitter than deep. It broke up political combinations, and sundered private friendships. It reduced the Liberal Party at the General Election of 1900 to an impotent and paralysed rump. Not until every prediction of the war party had been falsified, and every prediction of the peace party had been verified ; not until Lord Selborne had begun, painfully and laboriously, to undo the work of Lord Milner ; not until the country, put at length in possession of the real facts, swept the authors of the war from power by an avalanche of moral indignation, was the virulent poison of a fraudulent Imperialism expelled from the Liberal system. The rest of Lord Randolph's letter is equally wise ; and, though it failed to convince Sir Drummond Wolff then, it will convince every impartial reader now.

The relations of Lord Randolph Churchill with Mr. Balfour are a more delicate subject. If Mr. Balfour's weak point as a public man has been his want of fidelity to others, his strong point has been the fidelity of others to him. He never showed much consideration for Sir Stafford Northcote. But for his uncle Lord Salisbury he had a sincere rever-

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## *Stray Leaves*

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ence ; and he declined altogether to join his more detached friends in their attempt to capture the caucus. The details of this intrigue are nauseous. Mr. Churchill's defence of Mr. Balfour against the reproach of disingenuousness is worthy of Mrs. Candour herself :—

“Certainly Lord Randolph Churchill's correspondence lends no support to such a charge. He liked Mr. Balfour as a companion. He did not consider him formidable as an opponent. He was delighted to bear the evils of his antagonism for the pleasure of his society.”

How much more deadly is this murderous politeness than the most acrid invective, or the most violent abuse. “I'll meet you again at Philippi.” They call it Manchester now.

Mr. Chamberlain is treated with rather more severity, but with an ironic lightness of touch that is never brutal or rough. In October 1884, as is well known, Sir Stafford Northcote and Lord Randolph Churchill visited Aston Park near Birmingham, to take their share in a demonstration against the Liberal Government on behalf of the Tory Peers. Free speech is not the object, or even one of the objects, which the Birmingham Caucus was

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## *Lord Randolph Churchill*

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formed to promote. Imported Conservatives, "alien immigrants," could not be allowed to misrepresent the opinion of a Radical borough.

"It became known," says Mr. Churchill demurely, "that a large number of tickets were being forged. Of course no one in authority in the Liberal Party lent any countenance to such proceedings. Mr. Schnadhorst went away for the day upon important business. A few working men—a mere handful of trampled toilers—spontaneously, with no help from their Party, inspired by no other emotion than zeal for freedom and Reform, organised a counter-demonstration. The place of meeting was selected, by an unlucky coincidence, just outside the walls of Aston Park; and there also it happened that, on the appointed day, a cart containing ladders and other useful appliances drew up."

"Useful appliances" is good, distinctly good. What followed is history. Half bricks, and even whole bricks, were heaved at the strangers. The judicial bench was nearly deprived in advance of an illustrious occupant; but Providence intervened, and "Mr. Darling was lucky enough to make an escape from a window before the door of the room in which he had taken refuge was battered down." A

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small but sufficient majority in the House of Commons absolved Mr. Chamberlain from complicity in these proceedings, though a man upon whose affidavit he relied was afterwards convicted at the assizes. As Mr. Churchill drily says :—

“No evidence was ever produced to sustain any charge against Mr. Chamberlain of having himself fomented the disorders ; but an impression was created that the whole affair—especially the discharge of the fireworks upside down—showed that he had been only partially successful in exerting those influences of moral restraint which are so much to be commended in political leaders during times of popular excitement.”

Birmingham does not change its methods with its politics. When Mr. Lloyd-George went there at the time of the war, he went at the risk of his life.

Public men do not come very well out of the private correspondence published in this book. The late Lord Salisbury, for instance, was in all the personal relations of life a man of stainless rectitude and honour. But he would hardly have cared to be judged by his treatment of his political friend and colleague, Sir Stafford Northcote. When Glad-



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stone obtained his vote of credit for eleven millions in April 1885, he made an earnest and eloquent appeal to the whole House of Commons for union in the face of Russia and the world. He succeeded, and he preserved peace with honour. When he sat down at nine o'clock, the money was immediately and unanimously voted. Lord Randolph, who had gone away to dinner, was furious at the neglect of so fine an opportunity for faction, and dashed off at eleven o'clock from the Turf Club (he belonged to half the clubs in London) an indignant letter to Lord Salisbury. Lord Salisbury's course as a patriot and a gentleman would have seemed clear. A hearty commendation of Sir Stafford's magnanimity, a hope that the conduct of the House would have, as it had, a salutary effect upon the Russian Government, a protest against putting Party before Country, and a few sedative words on indiscriminate zeal, would have displayed the best side of public life in England. Here is what Lord Salisbury actually wrote :—

“I sympathise with you very heartily. But what *can* I do? It is not a case where advice would be of any service. In fact I sometimes think that my advice does more harm than good; for, if only partially followed, it may

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## *Stray Leaves*

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produce exactly the reverse of the intended effect. I hope the papers will attribute the collapse to our exalted patriotism. At least, that is the only hope with which one can console oneself."

It is painful to read this note. For a combination of treachery to a colleague, sneering cynicism, and utter disregard of national interests, its parallel could hardly be found. And from such a respectable, religious man too! Bradlaugh would have been ashamed of it.

Mr. Churchill reports a brief but interesting conversation, which shows at least what the Tory leaders meant when they denied the existence of any compact with Parnell before the defeat of the Liberal Government in June 1885. "There was no compact or bargain of any kind," said Lord Randolph in his own house to Lord Justice Fitzgibbon; "but I told Parnell, when he sat on that sofa, that if the Tories took office and I was a member of their Government, I would not consent to renew the Crimes Act. Parnell replied: 'In that case you will have the Irish vote at the elections.'" What more either Party wanted, Mr. Churchill does not explain. It was considered certain that Lord Randolph would take

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office ; and both sides were loyal to the compact which did not exist.

Lord Randolph Churchill was no respecter of persons ; and his relations with the Court were never friendly. After he became Secretary of State for India in the summer of 1885, he asserted his independence with a courage and a vigour which Mr. Chamberlain himself could scarcely have surpassed. Queen Victoria, who liked her sons to be useful, was anxious that the Duke of Connaught, an excellent soldier, should be appointed to the Presidency Command at Bombay. The nomination rested in strictness with the Secretary for War, Mr. Smith, with whom Lord Randolph took counsel, and with whom he agreed. The Queen, however, communicated directly with Lord Salisbury as Prime Minister, and with Lord Dufferin as Viceroy, urging the claims of His Royal Highness. Lord Randolph held strongly that the office, being in part political, and carrying with it a seat on the Governor's Council, ought not to be held by a member of the Royal Family. That, however, was not the point to which he attached most importance, as appears from the following passage in a letter which he wrote to Lord Salisbury :—

“I cannot continue to hold with any ad-

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vantage the high position which H.M. the Queen has conferred upon me, unless I feel I have the confidence of the Sovereign and her principal advisers. This elementary qualification I am without. Some time ago, I placed you in possession of the objections which I and others saw to the Bombay command being conferred upon the Duke of Connaught. I was not aware that it was possible, under such circumstances, that communications should pass between the Prime Minister and the Viceroy, at the instance of H.M. the Queen, without the knowledge of the Secretary of State, on a matter on which the latter held very strong and deliberate opinions."

Lord Randolph had his way. Lord Salisbury promised to give up his private correspondence with the Viceroy; the Cabinet acquiesced in Lord Randolph's view; the Bombay command was not filled up until the Conservatives came in once more, and all objection to the Duke's appointment had been removed by abolishing its political character. But the Indian Secretary had not made to himself friends at Court.

Those who entered into a competition of cynicism with Lord Randolph never won the game. We have seen Lord Salisbury's attempt

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after the Vote of Credit in April 1885. When Salisbury had succeeded Gladstone in office, and the General Election had yielded indecisive results, the Prime Minister suggested, among other things, a little ecclesiastical reform. The Indian Secretary answered him with refreshing candour :—

“If those ornamental, but, on the whole, rather useless and expensive Lords Spiritual care to justify their privileges by attempts at legislation, smile on them, give them every encouragement for bringing the Lords Temporal into a devout and heavenly frame of mind. Some good may possibly issue from such a source, if such should be the will of Providence. But Church reform which is the product of a Cabinet checked and controlled by Party Whips and guided by House of Commons lobbies is surely in its nature a monstrosity, possibly a profanity, certainly a farce.”

Gladstone would, of course, have expressed himself in very different language. But he would have arrived at much the same conclusion. He could not bear to see the affairs of the Church brought before the House of Commons at all.

What was Lord Randolph Churchill's real

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opinion about Home Rule? It is hard to tell, and perhaps not very important to ascertain. From the day when he took office, in June 1885, till the close of the General Election in December, he observed a politic silence on the subject. If he held out no hopes, he shut no doors. Before Christmas he had a confidential chat with his friend Mr. Labouchere, and heard a few things which astonished even him. A rumour was current, and found its way into a Dublin newspaper, that Lord Ashbourne, then Irish Chancellor, had drawn up a Home Rule Bill on a blank page in his copy of "Thom's Almanac." This, Lord Randolph told Mr. Labouchere, was "merely the folly of the *Daily News*," of which Mr. Labouchere was part owner. Lord Randolph himself must describe what ensued :—

"Then I was very much upset, for he proceeded to tell me that on Sunday week last Lord Carnarvon had met Justin McCarthy, and had confided to him that he was in favour of Home Rule in some shape, but that his colleagues and his party were not ready, and asked whether Justin McCarthy's Party would agree to an inquiry, which he thought there was a chance of the Government agreeing to, and which would educate his colleagues and his

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Party if granted and carried through. I was consternated, but replied that such a statement was an obvious lie; but, between ourselves, I fear it is not—perhaps not even an exaggeration or a misrepresentation. Justin McCarthy is on the staff of the *Daily News*, Labouchere is one of the proprietors, and I cannot imagine any motive for his inventing such a statement. If it is true, Lord Carnarvon has played the devil.”

The irony of the situation was complete, and must have amused even so jaded a cynic as Lord Salisbury. He knew, though Lord Randolph did not, that Mr. McCarthy had seen Lord Carnarvon before, had, in fact, prepared the way for the Lord Lieutenant’s celebrated interview with Parnell in July, of which he himself, as Prime Minister, expressly approved. Yet, when Gladstone wrote and urged that the Government should take up Home Rule because it would be a public calamity if that great question fell into the line of Party conflict, his hypocrisy made the colleagues of Lord Salisbury and Lord Carnarvon sick. Living in a glass house never yet deterred a politician from throwing stones. After Gladstone had definitely taken up Home Rule, Churchill always opposed it; and the

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Government threw down a challenge in the Queen's Speech of 1886, by describing the Legislative Union between Great Britain and Ireland as a "fundamental law." It appears that Mr. Buckle, the editor of the *Times*, was the author of this suggestion, and that he took the hint from the language of Lord Grey used by William the Fourth in 1834. As a matter of fact, it had no particular result. The Irish did not move an amendment; and the Government went out on "three acres and a cow." Mr. Churchill makes a needless apology for the phrase "an old man in a hurry," applied by his father to Gladstone. Lord Randolph's election address in 1886 contains many worse things than that; and to reprint the whole of it, even in an Appendix, was unwise. Its coarse savagery is revolting. But Gladstone was in a hurry; and so was the Duke of Wellington when he uttered his one great saying: "I have not time not to do what is right."

Mr. Churchill usually succeeds in suppressing himself. But we are all human, and once the temptation to point a moral proved irresistible:—

"Some respect is due to the forbearance of the Liberal majority. For six weary years



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the Liberal Unionist leaders sat on the Front Opposition Bench. Their followers held the balance of every division. Their authority sustained the Conservative Government. Their debating skill was always at hand when all else failed. They supported Coercion; they justified Mitchelstown; they even defended the Special Commission; and with decisive effect. Yet never once, even at times of sharpest indignation, were they denied by those who surrounded them their freedom of debate."

An inferior writer would have drawn an obvious contrast. Mr. Churchill makes no comment at all.

The culmination of Lord Randolph's career was his appointment at the age of thirty-seven, the "fatal age for genius," as Disraeli called it, to preside over the Exchequer and to lead the House of Commons. His brief management of the House was masterly; and, when Parliament had risen, he expounded at Dartford in Kent, where Sir William Hart-Dyke thought that he himself had a seat for life, an attractive outline of progressive legislation. But, well adapted as it was to catch the ears and win the votes of the working classes, it went a good deal too far for some members of the Conservative Cabinet. From a Liberal Unionist

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they might, while they grumbled, have put up with it. From a man calling himself a Tory, it seemed indecent, almost blasphemous. Lord Randolph wrote on the 6th of November to the Prime Minister :—

“I see the Dartford programme crumbling into pieces every day. The Land Bill is rotten. I am afraid it is an idle schoolboy’s dream to suppose that Tories can legislate—as I did, stupidly. They can govern and make war and increase taxation and expenditure *à merveille*, but legislation is not their province in a democratic constitution. . . . I certainly have not the courage and energy to go on struggling against cliques, as poor Dizzy did all his life.”

Lord Salisbury’s reply, like most of his other letters in this book, is purely cynical. He does not attempt to argue with his disappointed colleague on any ground of duty or principle. He simply tells him that it will not do. There is, however, a wonderful shrewdness in his analysis of the situation :—

“I think such a policy will fail. I do not mean that the ‘classes’ will join issue with you on one of the measures which hit them hard, and beat you on that. That is not the way they fight. They will select some other matter on which they can appeal to prejudice,

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and on which they think the masses will be indifferent; and on that they will upset you."

It is to be observed that Lord Salisbury frankly adopts as useful and convenient Mr. Gladstone's celebrated distinction between the classes and the masses, even admitting, in the Liberal Leader's own words, that "class and the dependents of class" are the backbone of the Conservative Party. Still more noticeable is his intimate acquaintance with the House of Lords and its ways. The Lords do not, except on very rare occasions, and then not for long, directly oppose a popular Bill. They lie in wait, and bide their time. Sooner or later, a Liberal Government introduces an unpopular measure; and then comes the time for wiping out old scores. Ministers who mean to fight the Lords should be very careful to have the people behind them.

The great Budget which Lord Randolph framed, but never introduced, is published for the first time by his son. It was really brilliant in conception, anticipating in its principal characteristics the Succession Duties of Sir William Harcourt, and the Finance Act of 1894. It involved, however, a reduction of the Army and Navy Estimates to which the Cabinet would not consent; and the Chancellor of the Ex-

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chequer resigned. "He knew," says his son, "that although the cry of 'Less waste and no jobbery' might appeal to many, 'Economy' was not in itself a popular cause to submit to a Democratic electorate, and was, moreover, foreign to the instincts and traditions of Toryism." This is not quite historical. Gladstone used to say that, when he was a Tory, the Tories were the Party of economy and peace. No more economical Government than the Duke of Wellington's ever existed in England. It was Disraeli, or rather Lord Beaconsfield, who began the era of extravagance in which modern Tories have rioted unashamed. At the end of 1886, the peace of Europe was by no means secure; and there were those who thought that Germany was preparing to pounce upon the French Republic.

"I am as much committed to economy as you are," wrote Mr. Smith from the War Office on the 16th of December, "but I cannot be the head of a great department in times like these and ask for less than the absolute minimum required for the safety of the country. I will go into figures with you if you like; but it is out of the question for you to talk of retiring. If one of us goes, I shall claim the privilege; and you may rest assured that if a

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man can be found to take my place, I shall be delighted to give all the help in my power to a successor brave enough to assume responsibility which I am not prepared to bear."

No hope of compromise was held out here. Lord George Hamilton, then First Lord of the Admiralty, was willing to make reasonable reductions. Smith was adamant; and he did not stand alone.

"The Cabinet, happily, not I," Lord Salisbury wrote from Hatfield, "will have to decide the controversy between you and Smith. But it will be a serious responsibility to refuse the demands of a War Minister so little imaginative as Smith, especially at such a time. It is curious that two days ago I was listening here to the most indignant denunciations of Smith for his economy—from Wolseley."

There is always some distinguished soldier whom no military expenditure will satisfy. It was Lord Wolseley then. It is Lord Roberts now. On the 20th of December, when Lord Randolph was at Windsor, he burnt his boats. He said nothing on the subject to the Queen. To the Prime Minister he wrote:—

"I am pledged up to the eyes to large reductions of expenditure; and I cannot change my mind on this matter. If the foreign policy of

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this country is conducted with skill and judgment, our present huge and increasing armaments are quite unnecessary, and the taxation which they involve perfectly unjustifiable. The War Estimates might be very considerably reduced if the policy of expenditure on the fortifications and guns and garrisons of military ports, mercantile ports, and coaling stations was abandoned or modified. But of this I see no chance, and, under the circumstances, I cannot continue to be responsible for the finances." "Believe me," he wrote afterwards, "I pray you, that it is not niggardly cheese-paring or Treasury crabbedness, but only considerations of high State policy which compel me to sever ties in many ways most binding and pleasant."

Lord Randolph had the entire sympathy of Mr. Chamberlain, who thought, by a strange misconception, that the Government was doomed. Lord Salisbury shared this singular delusion. Mr. Chamberlain, full of himself, and of self-pity, wrote:—

"You will have a hard time to go through. Your case will be mine almost exactly, and I can tell you it is a bitter pilgrimage which is in prospect. The Party tie is the strongest sentiment in this country — stronger than

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## *Lord Randolph Churchill*

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patriotism or even self-interest. But it will all come right in the end for both of us."

How little any of us know about the end. Lord Randolph had not many friends in the Government, or in the Conservative Party. To one of them, Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, the present Lord St. Aldwyn, who resigned the Irish Office in the spring of 1887, he wrote:—

"Now that you are gone, there is no one in the Government I care a rap about. I should so much like to see you and have a long talk. I have as yet seen none of my late colleagues, nor do I want to."

Lord Randolph never quarrelled by halves. Mr. Smith and others made friendly overtures to him. But they were not reciprocated. Lord Iddesleigh's sudden death led to an exchange of civil but rather cold notes with Lord Salisbury, whose own account of that tragic event is sufficiently curious to be quoted:—

"It was a very painful scene that I witnessed on Wednesday in Downing Street. I had never happened to see any one die before—and therefore, even apart from the circumstances, the suddenness of this unexpected death would have been shocking. But there was, in addition, the thought of our thirty years' com-



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panionship in political life; and the reflection that now, just before this sudden parting, by some strange misunderstanding which it is hopeless to explain, I had, I believe for the first time in my life, seriously wounded his feelings. As I looked upon the dead body stretched before me, I felt that politics was a cursed profession."

That was a feeling of which, for very different reasons, Mr. Gladstone and Lord Randolph were equally incapable. Mr. Gladstone always persuaded himself that what he did was right. Lord Randolph disliked the intrusion of morality into political affairs. Lord Salisbury knew when he was going wrong; but there were times when he could not swim against the stream.

Mr. Churchill selects, as a typical specimen of his father's sagacity, the Memorandum drawn and sent to Mr. Smith, then First Lord of the Treasury, the day after the Parnell Commission Bill had been introduced. It is indeed a masterly document, and the following paragraph could scarcely have been improved by Lord Herschell himself:—

"The whole course of proceeding, if the character of the allegations is remembered, will, when carefully considered, be found to



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be utterly repugnant to our English ideas of legal justice, and wholly unconstitutional. It is hardly exaggerating to describe the Commission contemplated as 'a revolutionary tribunal' for the trial of political offenders. If there is any truth in the above or colour for such a statement, can a Tory Government safely or honourably suggest and carry through such a proposal?"

That three Judges should have been found to sit upon this "revolutionary tribunal" is a proof that the passions excited by Home Rule had invaded even the Judicial Bench.

Always a fertile, and seldom a scrupulous schemer, Lord Randolph suggested an ingenious refuge for the Tory Government at the beginning of 1892.

"H. M. G. have no imagination or originality. The keystone of their policy has been to play against the life of Mr. G. This (not very noble, but still human) policy should, once taken up, be pursued remorselessly. To carry on the policy, the life of the Parliament should be prolonged into '93. How to do this? Introduce a measure dealing largely with the registration laws. 'One man one vote,' a trifle, could be conceded; twelve months' residence in lieu of eighteen estab-

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lished; paid officials for preparing register appointed in all constituencies. The new register could not be ready before the early spring of next year, and the convenient time for the Election would be the summer or autumn. Now, my dear Fitzgibbon, imagine the consternation, fury, and utter paralysis of the Gladstonians if the Government were to make this complete *volte-face*—this tremendous surprise (all so logical and defensible as it is), the relief and joy of the Tories at getting rid of Local Government, and at getting another year of life! Do not show this to any one, unless it be to David Plunket, if he is with you—the Government are too fond of appropriating my ideas without acknowledgment—but write me all you think about it. I could write pages in support of it, but your own wily and Ulysses kind of mind will suggest to you all the wonderful elaboration of which it is susceptible.”

It need hardly be said that these ideas were not adopted. To make Parliament last for seven years would have been a wild infringement of a custom which has acquired the force of law; and “one man one vote” would have destroyed the Tory domination in the counties. The General Election of 1892, like the General

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Election of 1885, was mischievously indecisive; and an observer remarked at the time that the long faces were on the winning side. Lord Randolph did not live to see the turn of events in 1895, which gave his Party more than ten years of place and power. After 1886 he never returned to office; nor did his colleagues make any effort to bring him back. He remained a Unionist, though he admired Gladstone more than any other living statesman. Like Disraeli, he took up questions which concerned the masses; his particular favourite being the Eight Hours Bill for miners.

“You can realise,” he wrote to Mr. Balfour, “how much importance I attach to the question, when I tell you that I am actually coming up from Lincoln, and missing three important races in which our horses run, to vote for the Bill. I do not think I would do this for the Monarchy, the Church, the House of Lords, or the Union.”

The element of Conservatism had been left out of Lord Randolph Churchill's composition; and, in fact, his principles were not much stronger than the great Duke of Marlborough's. But his interest in the working classes was genuine; and he foresaw that they would successfully claim for themselves a

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larger share of political power. Eleven years after his death, his prescience has been justified. His life was a fragment, a broken column, a riddle without an answer, a beginning and middle without an end. His son has traced the working of the unfinished plot, with indefatigable patience and consummate skill. The literary quotations which he prefixes to his chapters are exceedingly well chosen; and the whole book shows that he might have attained real eminence as a man of letters. If he fulfils the promise of his youth, Mr. Churchill will climb to the top of the tree.



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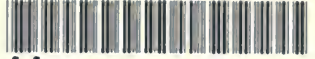
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